OFFICIAL REPORT
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Public Audit Committee

Wednesday 11 March 2026

Session 6

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PUBLIC AUDIT COMMITTEE
XXth Meeting 2026, Session 6

CONVENER

*Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (LD)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee City West) (SNP)
*Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Reform)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Chris Brown (Scottish Police Authority)
Chief Constable Jo Farrell (Police Scotland)
Alasdair Hay (Scottish Police Authority)
Don McGillivray (Scottish Government)
Neil Rennick (Scottish Government)
Deputy Chief Constable Alan Speirs (Police Scotland)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Claire Menzies

LOCATION

The Alexander Fleming Room (CR3)

Scottish Parliament

Public Audit Committee

Wednesday 11 March 2026

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:30]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Richard Leonard): Good morning. I welcome everyone to the 10th meeting in 2026 of the Public Audit Committee. We have received apologies from Joe FitzPatrick.

Agenda item 1 is for members to consider whether to take items 3 to 5 in private. Do we agree to take those items in private?

Members *indicated agreement*.

"Best Value in policing: Joint Best Value audit of policing in Scotland"

09:30

The Convener: The substantive agenda item this morning is further consideration of the report "Best Value in policing: Joint Best Value audit of policing in Scotland", which we took evidence on from the Auditor General and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland on 11 February.

We are joined by representatives from the Scottish Police Authority, Police Scotland and the Scottish Government. I welcome first of all from the Scottish Government Neil Rennick, director general of education and justice; alongside him is Don McGillivray, director of safer communities. We are joined from the Scottish Police Authority by Chris Brown, the chief executive, and Alasdair Hay, the vice-chair. Finally, we are joined by Chief Constable Jo Farrell, and alongside her is Deputy Chief Constable Alan Speirs, who has responsibility for professionalism and enabling services at Police Scotland. Good morning.

We have questions to put to you on the report. Before we get to those questions, I would like to invite representatives from each of the organisations around the table to make a short opening statement. Beginning with the Scottish Government, I invite Neil Rennick to address us.

Neil Rennick (Scottish Government): Thank you, convener. I will be brief. I am grateful to Audit Scotland and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for the report.

The report is a positive reflection of policing in Scotland. A number of strengths are highlighted, including strengths in effective leadership and governance and Police Scotland's work with partners. It also recognises scope for further progress and improvement. Public service reform is a priority for the Scottish Government, and we will support Police Scotland and the SPA to progress on-going work in the area. We also support work on the future vision for policing.

The Scottish Government is investing record funding in policing in 2026-27, including funding to support revenue and capital spending. The committee is aware that that funding has been delivered amid a challenging immediate and future fiscal landscape. Although workforce planning and resourcing are operational matters for the chief constable, the Scottish Government continues to engage with Police Scotland on key issues, including how the workforce can be modernised to

prioritise front-line duties and investment in the estate and digital technologies.

I know that all three bodies here are committed to implementing the recommendations of the best value report, and we will work in tandem to do so. We are happy to answer the committee's questions for the Scottish Government on the report.

Alasdair Hay (Scottish Police Authority): Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence. I have been a member of the Scottish Police Authority since 2021. I am the vice-chair of the authority and the chair of the policing performance committee. I hope that I will be able to contribute and to answer the questions that this committee poses today. I am joined on my left by Chris Brown, who is our chief executive and the accountable officer.

I begin by saying that the authority welcomes the best value audit by Audit Scotland and HMICS. Independent scrutiny is fundamental to public confidence, and we see the report not simply as an assessment of where policing stands today but as a platform for the next phase of reform and improvement.

The report recognises important strengths, such as constructive and mature strategic leadership across policing, sound governance arrangements, strong partnership working and effective financial control in a challenging fiscal environment. That reflects the commitment of the authority, Police Scotland and forensic services to work collectively in the public interest. However, we are equally clear about where we must go further. The audit rightly challenges policing to sharpen our strategic focus, strengthen our outcome-based performance reporting and accelerate progress in medium-term financial and workforce planning. We accept those recommendations in full.

As vice-chair, I want to ensure that the authority is not passive in responding to the report. That is why we have already begun strengthening committee scrutiny to avoid duplication and to focus on impact. We are aligning financial planning more explicitly with strategic outcomes, and we are working with the chief constable to ensure that workforce planning is progressed at pace and becomes more forward looking, scenario based and aligned to demand.

Best value is not a static compliance exercise; it is about continuous improvement, transparency and delivering sustainable policing that meets the needs of Scotland's communities now and in the future. The authority is determined to demonstrate measurable progress against each recommendation, with clear milestones and public reporting. We see this as an opportunity to lead improvement and not simply to respond to a critique. I look forward to discussing how we take that forward.

The Convener: Over to you, chief constable.

Chief Constable Jo Farrell KPM (Police Scotland): Good morning. The principles of best value resonate powerfully with me. I believe deeply in the value that policing provides to the public and to the public purse. Communities need, deserve and rightly demand effective public services that are delivered in the most efficient way. As a public leader, I have a duty to use resources responsibly and to work with other agencies to share resources and improve outcomes for the people who we serve.

My leadership principles align with those of best value. I provide vision, direction and trust, and I want policing to be high performing. A focus on sustainability and equality enhances those principles and also flows from them. As we entered the best value audit, we believed that policing had a good story to tell that was built on reform achieved, financial responsibility and strong collaboration. Since my appointment, I have set a vision of safer communities, less crime, supported victims, a thriving workforce and prioritising the front line for support. We are delivering on that vision, including the roll-out of body-worn video and the development of a strengthened community policing model, and the audit highlighted those strengths.

I record my thanks to Audit Scotland and HMICS for the quality of their work and their approach. As part of the audit, we made a detailed self-assessment, and the themes that we identified for improvement chime with those that are outlined in the audit. I am equally grateful to the audit team for the constructive approach to bring clarity and focus to the areas where I know policing can make improvements, such as workforce planning, supporting more people back to work and measuring performance.

The rapidly changing world, growing online harms, poverty, civil unrest, geopolitics and heightened assessment of counter-state and terrorism threats underline policing's duty to deploy dynamically to respond to threat, risk and harm as they emerge. We will work with the Scottish Government and across the public sector to ensure that policing continues to be a good partner and that we are in good partnerships. For example, in relation to mental health-related demand, we will help to ensure that more people get help from the agency that is best able to provide it.

Although the audit reflects genuine barriers, such as annual budgets and an inability to borrow or hold reserves, we are already taking forward the recommendations. More deeply, we embrace the

culture and mindset of best value, organisational learning and continuous improvement. I know the acute public finance pressures that we are all facing, and that a best value ethos will be essential to support good-quality services to our communities. That is the right thing for policing, our partners and the public that we serve. Thank you.

The Convener: Thank you. I ask each of you in turn to say whether you accept the findings and recommendations of the best value report. Mr Hay, you said in your opening remarks that you accept them. I do not know whether you want to confirm that.

Alasdair Hay: The authority accepts the findings and recommendations in full. We have already made progress on putting in place an action plan to respond to them, which will go before our audit, risk and assurance committee in May.

The Convener: Mr Rennick, does the Scottish Government accept the findings and recommendations of this report?

Neil Rennick: Yes, we do. We are committed to working with Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority in taking forward the full range of recommendations.

The Convener: Chief constable, over to you.

Chief Constable Farrell: Yes, we do. We have already begun the work to address the issues that are raised in the audit.

The Convener: Before we get into the detail of the report, we want to speak about some more contemporaneous issues, as you are in front of a parliamentary committee. I should begin by declaring my interest as the convener of the Professional Footballers Association Scotland parliamentary interest group.

On 11 February, we heard evidence from the chief inspector of constabulary. When we were speaking about operational matters and equality and so on, he told us:

> "For example, operational equality assessments are being done. If there is a Celtic v Rangers match at the weekend, an equality impact assessment will be done in the lead-up to policing that event. It is about widening that approach in a way that takes the human rights that sit at the core of the organisation's values and ensures that they are applied in every operational sphere."—[*Official Report*, *Public Audit Committee*, 11 February 2026; c 9.]

I suppose that the question is: did that happen in the lead-up to last Sunday's fixture at Ibrox?

Chief Constable Farrell: Within all our operational duties and commitments, obligations around human rights feature in planning, preparation and the deployment of resources, both to meet the needs of the operation—to ensure public safety—and to ensure that we uphold human rights. That runs through our operational policies and practice, and it is tested on a weekly basis.

To broaden out beyond football, between 40 and 50 events that require a policing response take place across Scotland every single week. They might be football or other sporting events, or they might be protest events. They all require us to deploy a legal, appropriate and proportionate response that is based on a threat assessment. That is the process by which we arrived at the resourcing levels, operational deployment and tactics that were deployed on Sunday afternoon.

The Convener: We heard in your opening statement, chief constable, about changes in the nature of crime and how you have to gear up accordingly. However, what was witnessed on Sunday was a good old-fashioned football pitch invasion, followed by violent conduct and disorderly and threatening conduct, including—as the PFA has pointed out—such conduct towards players and coaching staff, for whom that was their place of work. What is your observation on that, and what action are you taking?

Chief Constable Farrell: The events of Sunday afternoon were absolutely disgraceful. I condemn the people involved in violence. Fans, families, friends, people working at the clubs and my officers do not go to or work in that environment in order to witness, or to be on the receiving end of, threats and violence.

There is a point of reflection that, at the same time as policing was responding to those events, members of the public were injured and officers were injured. There was also lots of coverage in the media of the events of Sunday afternoon. However, when we got to Monday evening, there had still been no commentary from either club in respect of the violence that was witnessed. Nobody came out to condemn that violence.

09:45

We can put more and more resources into football, but that will not solve the underlying issue that people should be able to attend those events without fearing for their safety. I heard something very powerful on Radio Scotland on Monday morning when a news reporter—an individual who goes to report on football and other sports regularly—said that she was frightened. We witnessed one of my officers being deliberately tripped up on the pitch as she ran to offer assistance to people in the stadium. That was disgraceful.

Policing has a key role to play in ensuring safety and addressing those issues, but putting more resource into that dynamic is not going to solve the

problem. It is a broader societal issue that needs to be gripped by all the agencies that have responsibilities around football and the way in which fans conduct themselves.

The Convener: You pointed out the silence from the two clubs that were involved in that match. Do you think that the football authorities in Scotland are doing enough to hold the football clubs to account? How does that compare with England, for example, or other Union of European Football Associations countries?

Chief Constable Farrell: There are high-risk football matches across the United Kingdom. When I worked in north-east England, I worked at Newcastle v Sunderland and Sunderland v Newcastle matches. If I compare that with the events of Sunday afternoon, I see that a lot more needs to be done, given the level of violence. Prior to the match, there was a very significant and serious assault outside the ground.

We are talking about people going along to enjoy a sporting event. There is more to be done by all the parties to ensure the safety of fans. All those parties have an obligation to ensure the safety of fans, the safety of their employees and reasonable safety around officers.

The Convener: Thank you. Graham Simpson has a question or two in this area, so I will bring him in at this juncture.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Reform): Thanks, convener. I also used to live in the north-east of England and I have attended Newcastle v Sunderland matches. I have also attended many old firm games as a supporter, but I have never witnessed anything like what we saw on Sunday. It was absolutely appalling. I just could not believe what I was seeing.

I asked a question in Parliament yesterday about the silence of both clubs, which you touched on. Have you spoken to either club yet? Have they said anything publicly? I have not seen them say anything.

Chief Constable Farrell: I have not spoken to either club. As of Monday evening, the clubs had not said anything in relation to the events of Sunday afternoon. They might have done so in the meantime. I do not know whether Alan Speirs can add more clarity on that.

Deputy Chief Constable Alan Speirs (Police Scotland): There will be engagement with the commanders for the football. We have policed football matches in Scotland for many, many years, and there are two elements to that. First, there is the policing within the event, and our role there is to support safety and security. Police planning for the event on Sunday was done in collaboration with the arrangements for stewarding and for health and safety. The second element is the policing of the broader communities in and around Glasgow. I recognise that, in policing a football match, I am drawing officers away from local communities, so we look to ensure that we have a proportionate policing response to the event.

Graham Simpson: Were people assaulted outside the ground both before and after the game, or was it just before the game?

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: There was a dreadful, serious assault outside the stadium involving spectators who were attending the match. Fortunately, some of our technology captured that, we quickly made arrests, and those individuals are going through the court system. We have seen a sequence of events, pre-match and post-match, as well as what was witnessed within the stadium.

Graham Simpson: One of the videos that has been widely seen was of supporters charging into the ground through a disabled access point, barging stewards out of the way. I hope that nobody was hurt there. That should not have happened. I am not blaming the police for that, but it should not be able to happen, so there needs to be an inquiry. Were your officers nearby when that happened?

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: The stewarding of the match and spectator access to the match are stewarding matters. Looking at the circumstances, the turnstiles were rushed and a large proportion of fans entered the stadium without tickets. We will work with the club and stewards on what we can put in place to ensure safety and wellbeing, which is a critical role for the club's stewarding facilities when it comes to the entry and egress of spectators of the event.

Graham Simpson: In that case, it did not look as though there were turnstiles. It must have been a door that was open or a gate.

Chief Constable Farrell: I think it was a fire door—I think.

Graham Simpson: Okay. I turn to the events following the penalty shoot-out, when both sets of fans were on the pitch. I was not there; I was watching it on the telly, and it seemed to me that there was a group of largely young men, many of whom were dressed the same—we can call it a uniform—and many of whom were wearing balaclavas in club colours, charging towards the other set of fans. My question in the Parliament yesterday was about whether the clubs have a responsibility to review how they allocate tickets so that those kinds of people are not getting tickets for games, whether they are home or away.

Chief Constable Farrell: That would seem to be an obvious action that needs to be considered and taken by the clubs. It is about how they ensure the safety of their broader fan base and eliminate those individuals who have prepared the balaclavas and brought the pyrotechnics in with the intent of causing disruption and harm to those other people around them.

As you would expect, we are now carrying out an investigation into all the events of Sunday afternoon and, where crimes of violence and disorder have been committed, we will identify those people and come after them.

Graham Simpson: Is that something that the police could be discussing with the clubs? It is easy to say that the clubs should deal with this. Well, they should, but if they do not, innocent people can get caught up and then the police are involved.

Chief Constable Farrell: Yes, and the clubs will have been part of the on-going discussions that the commander and the chief superintendent had prior to the game, in preparation for the game and following the game, and the review involving the safety advisory group will ultimately certify the event as safe in advance of it taking place.

Graham Simpson: I have seen some commentary about the policing of that particular game and comparing it with how games at Hampden are policed, where a line of police and stewards is formed in front of fans. I guess that that is a deterrent to people coming on to the pitch. That did not seem to happen at Ibrox. When there is a penalty shoot-out, it is wrong for fans to go on the pitch, but you could anticipate that it might happen. I just wonder why there was that difference.

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: I spoke earlier about the two phases of policing a football match. There is the element that is within the stadium and the element that is without it. There is a cost associated with policing a football match inside a stadium and, over a number of years, we have experienced a real push and pull from the clubs to try to limit the costs. Football matches are now categorised. We provide a proportionate policing response that is suitable for the club.

When you watch the footage from Sunday, it seems like a very long while but, within 90 seconds, we had a cordon in place. I can give an assurance that, had the situation escalated any further, our next phase would have been to bring in a significant number of horses. We would have used our mounted officers and others, had that been required.

There is a real imperative on the clubs to look at how they want the matches to be policed. You are absolutely right about games at Hampden, but those involve an arrangement and agreement between both of the clubs that are involved. There is a lot of onus on the football authorities and the clubs to determine the policing footprint that they see inside a stadium. Across other parts of the United Kingdom, policing inside stadiums is very limited—in many instances, it does not take place at all.

Graham Simpson: At most games, you do not need a lot of police officers, I would have thought. However, you definitely need far more at a Celtic-Rangers game. Does it come down to money and how much the clubs are prepared to pay for policing inside the ground?

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: That is a consideration. We will provide the resources that the clubs want. We also base that on years of experience of policing such events. I have heard quite a bit of criticism of our officers. I think that they did a brilliant job on Sunday, alongside stewards, in the circumstances that they faced. We will certainly go through a whole series of debriefings and will have a strong voice on the issue. We are only a few weeks away from the next old firm game.

Graham Simpson: Thank you.

The Convener: On this theme, finally, the deputy convener has some questions.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (LD): I will try to keep my questions technical. I know that we have a lot of ground to cover, so this might be quickfire.

Would it be better if old firm games were never held in either of the clubs' stadiums? Should they be held only in a third-party stadium?

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: That is a matter for football clubs. From a policing perspective, we have the capability to police football matches appropriately. To go back to the chief constable's earlier comments, there is a bigger role for the football authorities and the clubs. There is no doubt that policing any old firm football match—before, during and after—is a drain on Police Scotland and has an adverse impact on the communities that we routinely serve. There is no question but that we put a significant policing plan around those events, but it is not for us to have a view on whether an alternative way of hosting those events should take place.

Jamie Greene: I am interested in the intelligence work that you undertake, although I do not expect you to go into any operational details. Some points have been made about the types of organisations and groups that are infiltrating football matches. I find it difficult to believe that these are not premeditated and pre-planned

activities. What work is Police Scotland doing ahead of games to monitor Facebook groups, WhatsApp groups and other closed networks, where such activities are clearly being co-ordinated en masse in advance of matches?

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: We do a huge amount of football intelligence work. More often than not, our challenges around football are not within the stadium; ironically, they are very often before and, at times, after the matches. However, we have a rich intelligence picture.

With regard to the old firm, there are risk elements with both sets of supporters. When the match is happening inside the stadium, the crowd is literally all season ticket holders—people are known—so our challenges are generally outside the stadium. If the question is whether we could have envisaged what happened after the match at the weekend, my understanding is that there was nothing to suggest that people would behave in the way that we witnessed on Sunday.

10:00

Jamie Greene: That is interesting.

My final question relates to legislation that affects your officers. I recall vividly the passage through the Parliament of the bill that became the Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Act 2022, which includes provisions to deal with fireworks and pyrotechnics, including flares, specifically at sporting events, and even more specifically at football matches—you very rarely see flares being chucked around Murrayfield, that is for sure. Something is not working. I saw flares being chucked across the pitch and towards people, including players and police officers. What is going wrong? Is the legislation not fit for purpose, or is the problem the implementation of the powers that the 2022 act granted your officers?

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: It is a massive challenge. You can see the challenge across Europe in relation to flares and pyrotechnics at football games. The legislation is in place, and officers and stewards seize pyrotechnics at many games.

Jamie Greene: How many were seized at the weekend?

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: I do not have that detail.

Jamie Greene: How many times did officers use the power of stop and search?

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: I do not have that level of detail. You will understand that we must have really strong reasons for the use of stop and search. I do not have the technical details for the incident at the weekend.

Jamie Greene: I think that you see my point. The flares are getting into the stadium in people's pockets, down their socks or in other ways, so there is still an issue. The police now have additional powers that they did not have a couple of years ago, so officers on the ground outside the stadium before the match have additional powers to prevent flares from getting in in the first place, but they are still getting in, so there is a problem.

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: We do have those powers, but let us be clear that access to stadiums and the stewarding of football matches are not the police's primary focus, so we do not have a role to play in permitting season ticket holders' access to a stadium. We have work to do alongside the football club and the stewarding arrangements. It is easy to look at policing as the primary method of resolving the issue, but the stewarding arrangements are in place to permit fans' access to stadiums.

The Convener: Thank you very much for answering our questions on that incident. That is not why you are here, but it is of extreme public interest, so we wanted to cover some of that ground.

If I may, I will take you back to the report on best value in policing and a matter that is perhaps fairly dry but really important. At our meeting on 11 February, Stephen Boyle, the Auditor General for Scotland, said:

> "What we are talking about here is public service reform and transformation."—[*Official Report*, *Public Audit Committee* 11 February 2023; c 19.]

I am old enough to remember that, 10 years ago, a rather costly decision had to be taken to abandon the i6 Accenture digital information technology programme, which was supposed to save £200 million. I bring that up because IT systems and digital transformation have quite a chequered history. Director general, can you bring the committee up to date with where things are and give us some assurance that things are on track with the investments in digital support to help the chief constable and her officers to carry out their work?

Neil Rennick: I will obviously allow Police Scotland and the SPA to talk about some of the internal work and decisions on digital investment. Over the past decade, there have been positive examples of the Scottish Government working with Police Scotland and other justice partners to take forward digital innovations. In particular, I highlight digital evidence sharing capability—DESC—which the Scottish Government put significant resources into to allow for more effective sharing of evidence across the justice system. Analysis of DESC and the parallel work on summary justice reform indicated that that investment is delivering

significant efficiencies. That has helped to facilitate decisions by Police Scotland around the investment in and roll-out of body-worn video. Again, we are aware of the benefits that that is delivering in terms of faster justice decisions and in reducing the need for police officers to provide direct evidence. There are positive examples of other work in Police Scotland around its systems, and I am sure that Police Scotland and the SPA will be able to update you on those.

The Convener: Okay. Mr Brown or Mr Hay—do you want to comment on where we are with the IT investments?

Chris Brown (Scottish Police Authority): Yes, thanks, convener. The i6 process or debacle—call it what you will—was certainly before my time, but the lessons from that process can now be seen across the whole digital portfolio. Since then, Police Scotland has taken a very conscious decision to avoid a big bang type of implementation. It has gone for a far lower-risk, more phased approach to technology-enabled change over the past decade or so.

That has also been due in part to having quite a constrained capital budget—certainly in the earlier days of Police Scotland—which has meant making choices about the sequencing and prioritisation of change. The priority over that time has probably been digital change that has direct operational benefits. That includes mobile core operational solutions—the consolidated crime system, which, in effect, consolidated what were eight legacy systems—as well as DESC, as the director general said, and, most recently, body-worn video. In parallel, a lot of work has been going into customer contact and how people use the contact, command and control and telephony systems that underpin that.

The Convener: Okay. Thank you. Would the chief constable or deputy chief constable like to comment on that?

Chief Constable Farrell: If money was no object, Police Scotland would be the best digitised policing organisation in the UK. That is my ambition. The digital transformation projects that colleagues have described in relation to an integrated crime system, the use and deployment of body-worn video, DESC and the new infrastructure across our contact centres not only have benefit to us as an organisation—body-worn video, for example, relates directly to supporting our front-line officers in relation to safety and confidence—but bring efficiency and benefit to the broader justice system.

Digital evidence transfer and body-worn video create a really strong platform through which material is moved around the justice system, speeding up the rate at which all the parties can access that material. In the future, our new command and control contact centre technology will allow members of the public to access policing by digital means, which we all use across our daily lives. Clearly, the specification for that technology has to be very robust and significant given things such as cyberthreats. The fact that we now have one crime operational system means that we can operate in one single, national way and drive efficiencies in how we manage crime.

We have demonstrated that we have a really strong record as a triumphant group in driving forward positive change and efficiencies—there is significant scope in that regard. In many respects, some of this is just the beginning. For body-worn video, we will look to be able to share footage with partners across local authorities, particularly those who are working in public protection and on issues such as domestic violence, because a picture speaks a thousand words. My experience is that such material is really powerful in helping social workers to make informed and evidence-based decisions on family and child protection issues. We have a really strong momentum with regard to digital transformation in Police Scotland, and it will go from strength to strength.

The Convener: Thank you very much. Before I bring in Graham Simpson, I note that you mentioned capital constraints. At, I think, paragraph 24, the report points out that the move from local authority-controlled policing to a single Scotland-wide force—that was a policy decision; it was not a decision taken by any of our witnesses this morning—has left you in a situation where you have no reserves and no borrowing powers in the way that a local authority has. I think that that colours the fiscal climate that you are working in.

I bring in Graham Simpson to put some questions to you.

Graham Simpson: I have a few areas to cover, and I will start off with something very current—indeed, even more current than the old firm game. As you will have seen, a press release came out yesterday from the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner, and I think that it raises a couple of questions for yourself, chief constable, as well as for Mr Rennick and the Scottish Government.

The basic thrust of what the commissioner is saying is that Police Scotland does not routinely take fingerprints of everyone who is arrested, which means that—I am paraphrasing—people can slip through the net. Over a three-month period, there were just over 3,000 cases where an officially accused person was arrested but did not have their prints taken. The commissioner, Dr Brian Plastow, is very firm on this, and in the report that he has produced, he has made it very clear

that the situation needs to change. In fact, he says that, over 12 months, Police Scotland custody staff

"might be failing to fingerprint more than 12,000 … people with officially accused status including those arrested for serious crimes and offences."

Do you accept the point, chief constable?

Chief Constable Farrell: I do accept the point. Obviously, I was aware that the commissioner was going to make that recommendation, and he is absolutely right. Everybody who comes into custody should have all of their biometrics taken, regardless of whether those already exist on the various databases, and we need to put stronger governance and grip around that to ensure that it takes place.

Graham Simpson: So why is it not taking place?

Chief Constable Farrell: There are some issues with regard to resourcing, and there is a need for additional investment to ensure that it happens on every single occasion. In a piece of work that we are doing at the moment, we are determining what our custody provision looks like across the country and the right level of resourcing that we need to close off what is a significant issue, while at the same time having an estate and a staffing and resourcing model that are fit for the future with regard to the demands on custody.

Graham Simpson: Is it Police Scotland policy not to fingerprint everyone, or is it just that you do not have the resources to do it?

Chief Constable Farrell: I think that the policy should be firmer. At times, resourcing levels mean that people who have already been fingerprinted, whether they are being released from custody or are going to court, are not fingerprinted while they are in custody. That should not happen.

Graham Simpson: So the policy needs to change.

Chief Constable Farrell: Yes, and the governance and grip, too.

Graham Simpson: Is it your responsibility to change the policy?

Chief Constable Farrell: It is.

Graham Simpson: Are you going to change it?

Chief Constable Farrell: Absolutely.

Graham Simpson: When will you do that?

Chief Constable Farrell: We received a draft of the report, and we are working on it.

10:15

Graham Simpson: The report says that front-line police officers in England and Wales use mobile fingerprint technology that allows them to

"use their smartphones to identify people in less than a minute",

which saves police time and resources. That sounds like a good thing.

The report also notes that, at the United Kingdom level, the Home Office has a biometrics strategy and has provided funding for biometrics projects, including the creation of a new national centre for artificial intelligence for England and Wales, 50 live facial recognition vans and a project to speed up fingerprint processing. Mr Rennick, Dr Plastow said:

"By contrast, the Scottish government does not have a biometrics strategy for Scotland and accordingly there is no multi-year capital allocation to Police Scotland or the Scottish Police Authority"—

Mr Hay—

"to support a devolved vision where enhanced biometric capabilities could improve community safety in Scotland. Having such a strategy for Scotland would seem a sensible approach".

It would seem a sensible approach, would it not?

Neil Rennick: As we do with any independent report, we will consider the recommendations. Part of the purpose of having the Biometrics Commissioner is that they can assist us by suggesting areas in which we can engage with Police Scotland, the SPA and other agencies, and we will do so following those recommendations.

We do not tie the capital funding that we allocate to Police Scotland to particular commitments. Such decisions are taken by the SPA and Police Scotland after they have considered the overall level of capital funding that we have provided.

If there is evidence of lessons that we can learn from other parts of the UK, whether in relation to policy changes at a national level or areas of investment, we speak to Police Scotland and the SPA about those issues.

I do not know whether Don McGillivray wants to add anything.

Don McGillivray (Scottish Government): The only thing that I will add is that, whereas there are, I think, 43 police forces in England and Wales, there is only one in Scotland. One of the reasons why the Home Office has taken particular ownership of the biometrics strategy in England and Wales is to provide a national approach. In Scotland, there is a question about where the issue sits between the Government and the police—who is best placed to make strategic decisions about biometrics? However, as Neil

Rennick said, the post of Biometrics Commissioner was created precisely so that they could give advice and suggest ideas for improvement in the area.

Graham Simpson: You cannot wash your hands of it, Mr McGillivray. That is just not acceptable. Dr Plastow's criticism is that we do not even have a biometrics strategy, and we do not. Surely we should have one, irrespective of whether we have one police force or 43—that is irrelevant. There needs to be a strategy.

Don McGillivray: As Neil Rennick said, we will obviously consider the recommendation and take it forward.

Graham Simpson: Do you have a view on that, chief constable?

Chief Constable Farrell: I will talk to the specific points that you have referenced. Having the roadside capability to take somebody's fingerprints is part of the national law enforcement data system, which is the replacement for the police national computer. We are part of that programme, so we will be able to access that technology in due course, if we have the right funding and decide to prioritise that.

You mentioned the AI approach in England and Wales that has been funded by the Home Office. We are in discussions with that team down south on how we can collaborate. Police Scotland has some capabilities, and we have built a data science team, so we can contribute to the broader UK effort on the use of AI in law enforcement.

We are looking at the capability and investment that would be required in relation to live facial recognition. Personally and professionally, I think that the tool is very effective. However, there are differing views in relation to intrusion and privacy. Conversations are on-going in relation to balancing the rights of individuals and their privacy with the need and desire to identify those who have committed crimes and cause harm.

Graham Simpson: I am a bit of a fan of cop shows on telly. I watched one recently in which one of the police forces in England had hundreds of pieces of closed-circuit television and was trying to track someone, and it used AI to do so, which was quite amazing. It saved hours of time, and the police actually managed, using AI, to find somebody. That is where it could be used, is it not?

Chief Constable Farrell: Absolutely. However, any new technology that impacts on individual citizens needs to be managed and consulted on appropriately in order to ensure that we uphold individual rights and can explain how it will be used.

Graham Simpson: Okay. I will move on and ask about the mental health of officers, which is a big issue. In fact, it seems to be the most common cause of long-term absence for officers and police staff. That absence comes with a cost of £80 million for Police Scotland, and absence levels are higher than pre-Covid levels. That is outlined in exhibit 3 on page 21 of the Auditor General's report. You touched on the issue earlier, but how is Police Scotland tackling the mental health of officers?

Chief Constable Farrell: As the committee appreciates, this is a sensitive issue, and one on which we have a sharp focus. Whether through friends or relatives, or through watching those TV shows, it will not be of surprise to people that officers on the front line face trauma on a regular basis, given the nature of the role that they undertake. I think that policing is unique in that space; clearly, other emergency services also face trauma, but the frequency with which our frontline officers are subject to trauma probably makes them unique.

Alan Speirs will provide the committee with detail of the measures and investment that we have put in place to support officers, and to try and take a more preventative approach. However, because this is important, and because the report also talks about modified duties, I will give the committee an example of the critical and trauma-related incidents that one sergeant and six police constables—a small team in a town in Scotland—experienced in just one month. The detail of this was the subject of the top award in our recent bravery and excellence awards, but it is important that I also put this detail to the committee.

In one month, this small team of one sergeant and six constables located and supported a woman who was in distress and on a train line to come back over the fence to safety. She was threatening to take her own life. They also recovered the body of a young person who had jumped from a bridge, and the officers then accompanied the deceased to hospital. They were first responders to a serious agricultural incident, where they provided CPR for 20 minutes while waiting for the ambulance service. They responded to a serious road traffic collision in which the driver suffered life-changing injuries, and they supported the driver's family. They responded to a person who had swum out to sea, and they searched for a high-risk missing person who had threatened to take their own life, discovering them in a vehicle in the early hours of the morning. In that month, they also discovered a person who had taken their own life. Just to reiterate, that is one sergeant and six PCs. By anybody's measure, those front-line officers are witnessing a significant amount of trauma.

One of my priorities is that we strengthen the front line of policing across Scotland. We need to ensure that important functions that we could describe as middle and back-office functions are done in the most efficient and effective way, so that we have the best capability and capacity on the front line of policing, in order to support our colleagues.

Alan will talk about the investments that we have made to address issues of psychological trauma.

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: We recognise what you highlight, Mr Simpson—38 per cent of our officer absences are mental health-related absences, which equates to around 80,000 working days being lost each year as a consequence of poor mental health.

Our training focuses on being trauma informed. We have a suite of training that highlights the kind of trauma that the chief constable talked about. We also have trauma-informed processes to provide immediate aftercare to officers in those instances, and we apply that training and those processes on a daily basis. We very recently refreshed the occupational health and employee assistance offerings that are available to officers and staff. A big part of that is about psychological support.

We are committed to working on this issue, and we recognise the challenges that our officers face, so we are working hard in this space and investing as much as we can to provide the right levels of support to our officers and staff.

Graham Simpson: The figures are quite stark, but it is easy for members of the public not to realise what police have to go through over the course of a career. I have spoken to fairly senior officers who have been very open with me about the mental challenges that they have.

All that leads—you touched on this, chief constable—to putting officers on what is called "modified duties"; in other words, duties that are not necessarily out on the front line. A large number of officers are on modified duties; I think that it is 14 per cent, which is a lot. There was a bit of criticism in the report saying you have not made enough progress on dealing with the growing amount of officers who are put on those duties. Do you accept that?

Chief Constable Farrell: Just to give you a greater insight into the issue, officers who are on modified duties is a broad group, and there are three or four key groups of officers that sit within that. Anybody who is pregnant or has recently given birth would sit within that group. Individuals who are restricted from front-line duties or suspended due to allegations of wrongdoing also sit within that group. There is also a group of people who are not able to work in front-line duties temporarily—which might be as a result of an injury on duty, or because of a pre-planned medical procedure—but who we anticipate will return to full duties. Then there are those individuals who are not able to complete the full duties of a constable. It is a highly regulated area of business that is managed through our occupational health unit.

10:30

There is more work to be done on ensuring that officers have meaningful work that is not on the front line of policing but uses their skills, knowledge and experience. Within that, there are also options for individuals who are never going to be able to return to full duties and who are not going to be able to play a policing role. One of those options is ill-health retirement, and we have invested more money and, in collaboration with the authority, which has a role in this, have speeded up the process by which people leave the organisation on ill-health retirement. In my experience, when it comes to those in that position who know that they are going to leave the organisation, it is not in anybody's interest to make the process very long-winded. We want people to leave the organisation with dignity, and we want to support them as best we can.

However, I go back to where I started. Front-line policing is a hard job. As you will know from people's experiences and from what you have read, trauma comes in different forms, and it can affect people in the immediate aftermath or it can come further down the line. It is a complex area.

Graham Simpson: I have taken up quite a bit of time, but I just want to ask about one more area. Again, it relates to mental health, but the mental health of the people who you are dealing with. The committee had an inquiry into adult mental health in 2023, and on 16 November of that year, we had Chief Superintendent Derek Frew in front of us. I do not know whether he is still with the police—

Chief Constable Farrell: I do not think that he is.

Graham Simpson: So he has retired. Anyway, he was in front of us and had been tasked with dealing with these issues. I was recounting to him that in Lanarkshire, where I live, entire shifts of officers sometimes had to sit with people in accident and emergency and therefore could not deal with other cases—it was quite astonishing, really. We then discussed the approach taken by some forces in England, and I mentioned Humberside Police; it had put in place what was called the right care, right person system, which accepts that the police are not always the best people to deal with those suffering with mental

health issues. At that point, Chief Superintendent Frew told me:

> "I hope that people will be supportive of the fact that Police Scotland is not taking the position that forces down south have adopted, where certain areas have said, 'We are stepping back and we're not going to do that.'"—[*Official Report*, *Public Audit Committee*, 16 November 2023; c 11.]

Comments from you, chief constable, that I read recently seem to suggest that you have had a change of view, perhaps, because the numbers are so great. I just want you to set out what your current thinking is.

Chief Constable Farrell: When I joined Police Scotland in the autumn of 2023, I spoke to front-line officers and found the two biggest demands on them that they did not see as an efficient way of doing business. The first was their attendance at court being demanded and then their not giving evidence. We have made some good inroads into that, although there is more work to be done. I hope that colleagues across the justice system will agree that we have put our full weight behind trying to bring about change in that system to make it more efficient, make it better for victims and make things more efficient for the agencies.

I have tried to adopt the same approach in our response to mental health. Fast forward to now, though, and officers will still tell me, as David Threadgold of the Scottish Police Federation will tell me, "Chief, you've made no impact on the amount of time we're spending on supporting and filling the gaps of other agencies." I have said to the Criminal Justice Committee, and the SPA in the past month, that I am probably at the end of the line in this space. While we sit with individuals in hospitals and fill the void left by other agencies, we are not getting to other calls and other victims in a timely way.

It would not sit well with me just to say, "We're stepping away from this." We have a role, and article 2 of the European convention on human rights, on the right to life, is absolutely our priority. However, having engaged and worked with different individuals across different agencies and invested a lot of time and resource, we are making very little headway in this space.

For the officers on the front line, that is not satisfying work, and it is not why people join the police. Alan Speirs will give you some specifics, but we will therefore move to a different position. I do not want to be in a position where we say, "Don't bother ringing us because we're not going to respond." That would not be right and it would not sit well with me or with officers across Police Scotland. However, I would not be doing my duty if I continued to almost condone everybody walking away and leaving us, because we have other priorities. As my colleague ACC Paton said to the Criminal Justice Committee, it is a matter of mental health and not justice.

Alan Speirs will talk about some measures that we are going to take fairly rapidly, but before I hand over to him, I note that there are areas of good practice. Ayrshire is a location where there is some good provision. However, the picture is such a patchwork, and that is not right or proper. We have a strange situation where people ring the police when they need psychological support. How has that happened?

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: We have been committed in this space. About 18 months ago, we stood up a mental health task force, recognising that we had a role to play, and we wanted to drive progress in the area. However, as the chief constable observed, we have probably not made the progress or had the impact that we thought we might have been able to achieve.

In broad terms, we are receiving about 500 calls a day from vulnerable members of the public, and about 85 per cent of them are not about crime or a policing matter. When I deploy officers to deal with a mental health-related incident, it takes, on average, between four and six hours for them to deal with that single incident. That gives you a sense of the volume.

We introduced a mental health pathway whereby we could divert calls to the national health service and we introduced a mental health index whereby we could get immediate access to a clinician at the scene of an incident. Those things have had some degree of success. Some 15,000 incidents have gone down the mental health pathway over two years. However, that is set against 500 calls a day, so officers see little impact. The mental health index works superbly in some local authority areas, but in other areas the phone just rings out. We are having really limited impact in that space.

We also see a volume of calls coming from partner agencies. To be blunt, we can see the drop-off at four o'clock in the afternoon, as day shift staff finish. However, our 24/7 service continues.

We currently do warm transfers into the national health service. That simply means that, when we connect with a member of staff in the NHS, we will step away from the call. We are also moving very quickly to look at bringing in cold transfers. When it is a matter that we simply cannot support, we will do that.

We are looking at a policy on how we can step away from the hospital. I could take you to any hospital in Scotland and you would see a multitude of police vehicles sitting there. I think that body-worn video will help us. However, we are not

dealing with individuals who are under arrest. I say again that it is a matter of mental health and not justice. Our option is custody, court and conviction. That is not the route to support mental health. In the coming financial year, we will take a much firmer position on this, given what officers are telling us.

What concerns me most is the detriment to local communities, which are not getting the police service that they look to get. I made the point to the Criminal Justice Committee last week that, in rural and remote communities, policing is different, and we will never step away from instances where a person is facing acute challenges and there is a threat to life. We will respond in those circumstances. There is a measured approach, but the volumes of calls and the demands on the service are, as I have highlighted, enormous.

Graham Simpson: Mr Rennick, do you want to say anything?

Neil Rennick: I am happy to. I am grateful to you for raising questions about this really important topic. His Majesty's inspector and the Parliament's Criminal Justice Committee have looked at the issue, and it is one that we have engaged in over an extended period with Police Scotland and our health colleagues in Government.

It is important to say that we will never be able to separate out overlaps between mental health and justice, given the population that the police are engaging with. For example, around 15 per cent of people who are in prison are thought to have a long-term mental health condition, and those are people who have been all the way through the justice system. There will always be an overlap between mental health and justice. However, we agree that, for the vast majority of people with mental health issues, a justice intervention is not the best outcome.

As the deputy chief constable said, over time, we have developed a number of initiatives. Those include the mental health pathway, the mental health index, work on the distress brief intervention programme and an unscheduled care programme. There are really good positive examples. The chief constable mentioned Ayrshire, and I think that NHS Lanarkshire also has a gold-standard model of community triage. There are examples of safe spaces in Perth and Dundee, and other examples across the country.

I suppose that that is what gives me hope on the issue. We know that, in particular locations, there are good practice examples. While accepting the variability in terms of rurality and so on, we need to share the good practice, apply it more widely and make sure that it is impacting at scale. One issue that His Majesty's inspector identified—again, this is to the credit of police officers—is that there is a risk aversion, in that officers do not want to leave people unless the officers are sure that those people are in a safe space. That redoubles the requirement for us to ensure that alternatives are available. We are taking the issue incredibly seriously. As the deputy chief constable says, it is about making sure that we do that at the appropriate scale.

Don, is there anything else from your perspective?

Don McGillivray: No—you have covered it. There are plenty of examples of good practice. The challenge that lies ahead is delivering those at pace and scale across the country in a more consistent manner. That is what we need to focus on now.

We know what is needed, such as safe spaces, better handover in A and E and so on. What we need to focus on now—and what we are focused on—is the pace and scale of getting that in place more consistently across the country.

Graham Simpson: Thanks for your patience, convener. I thought that those were important areas to cover.

The Convener: Absolutely—they are contained centrally in the report that is before us. They have been identified by HM inspectorate and the Auditor General.

Colin Beattie has some questions.

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): I have some broad questions on the strategic direction of Police Scotland, including vision, leadership, guidance, governance and equalities. There are some good comments in the Auditor General's report but, of course, as we are the Public Audit Committee, we will focus on the bad bits.

The report says that Police Scotland

"benefits from effective strategic leadership",

which is excellent, but it goes on to say that the

"current strategic priorities and outcomes are broad"

and

"not well defined".

It also says:

"Governance arrangements are effective, though scrutiny could be improved by a review of what is discussed across SPA committees".

I will start with the SPA. What is your view on the Auditor General's comment about better communication across the SPA committees?

10:45

Alasdair Hay: The Scottish Police Authority's role is to provide oversight and scrutiny of policing, but it is also to act as an advocate for policing, because we want to assist the service on its journey of continuous improvement. Most of the heavy lifting on scrutiny is done by our committees, and there will always be a degree of overlap between the issues that are discussed in the resources committee, for example, and those that are discussed in the people committee. We want to limit that overlap, so our approach has been to review committee effectiveness annually.

We involve stakeholders in that process—we want to minimise the burden on Police Scotland, which is a key stakeholder, while still providing appropriate scrutiny and oversight. In the past, Police Scotland has raised a question about different committees scrutinising the same work, so we are actively taking steps to reduce that. This year, we have internal auditors—BDO—coming in to look at that. We are looking at perhaps getting some external support in order to streamline the effectiveness of the committees.

By taking those steps, we hope that scrutiny and oversight will remain strong, and that our insight and understanding—so that we can act as appropriate advocates—will also remain strong, without placing an unnecessary burden on policing.

Colin Beattie: To refer back to the Auditor General's report, can you give me some idea of the SPA's approach to developing the overall direction and priorities for policing in the next strategic police plan for 2026? What plan is in place to engage with the public, as well as the workforce and stakeholders, and what progress has been made on that to date?

Chris Brown: I will take that question, if that is okay. Last month, we published our new strategic police plan following a public and stakeholder consultation period. In doing that, we tried to join up the Scottish Government's policing priorities with the chief constable's vision—and the four pillars underpinning that vision—and the detailed business plan that the chief constable and her colleagues have produced to track delivery against those strategic priorities.

Notably, I do not think that we have ever previously been in a position in which all the building blocks line up as well as they currently do. The root cause of some of the other issues that are highlighted in the Auditor General's report, such as the medium-term financial strategy and workforce planning, has been a lack of alignment. Pieces of work have been done in isolation and not necessarily woven together into something coherent. For the first time, we have that level of coherence.

I give credit to the chief constable, because the catalyst for joining all that work together has been the 2030 vision—the chief's purpose, vision and values—and how that has translated into very detailed strategic products that have allowed the SPA to track delivery over the years of that plan

Colin Beattie: What about engagement with stakeholders, the workforce and the public? How is that carried out?

Chris Brown: We had a public consultation on the strategic police plan. If memory serves, something similar was done for the vision. I do not want to put words in Jo Farrell's mouth, so I will perhaps let her speak about that.

One area that the report specifically highlights as one in which we could have done better is internal staff engagement on the strategic police plan. I assume that there will be an opportunity to refresh the SPP, because it will certainly be in the next Government's gift—whichever party forms the next Government—to revisit its policing priorities. The change in Government will be a catalyst for us to do that work again.

Chief Constable Farrell: The purpose of the vision—which Mr Brown described very well—was to bring additional clarity and focus. You might ask, "What is it in 10 simple words?" However, it is a national service, and when I looked across that strategic landscape, I thought, "Gosh, that's complicated", because it is a complex business. At the same time, on any given day, somebody will ask, "Well, where do you want our focus to be?" Answering that by saying that the focus should be on

"safer communities, less crime, supported victims and a thriving workforce"

has brought focus and clarity, and that is reflected in the report.

There was broad consultation on that vision, both internally and externally, and with partners. If you ask me whether we could have done more of that, the answer would be "possibly". However, we certainly carried out consultation and took feedback.

Colin Beattie: What improvements is the SPA considering in relation to further improving governance arrangements?

Alasdair Hay: I have already reflected on the fact that we do an annual review of our committee effectiveness. I believe that that is the cornerstone of delivering our responsibilities in relation to scrutiny and oversight, and it enables us to develop our insights into the organisation and our understanding of it.

Beyond that, a key issue is the alignment of strategies within the organisation. We start with the Government's policing priorities and then ensure that the strategic policing plan and vision, the SPA's corporate strategy and the forensic services strategy are all aligned and are linked to appropriate performance and accountability frameworks. We also ensure that the plans that underpin the strategies are appropriately resourced, and that the true priorities within the organisation have the correct level of resource in terms of the necessary finance, expertise and technology.

The report that we have received on best value points to all of those things. They are not issues that we were unaware of and some of the key building blocks to address them are already in place. However, this best value report gives an additional impetus to ensure that it is done at pace, but also robustly, so that it stands us in good stead.

Colin Beattie: The chief constable might be more suited to respond to my next question. In response to serious concerns raised relating to institutional inequalities, Police Scotland committed to becoming an anti-discriminatory and anti-racist organisation. What exactly is being done to deliver on those commitments?

Chief Constable Farrell: I will ask DCC Speirs to go into the detail in relation to the policing together programme.

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: The driving force for Police Scotland in delivering on equality, diversity and inclusion is our policing together programme. I note at the outset that institutional discrimination is not unique to policing in Scotland; it is very much a societal issue. What is different is that Police Scotland has acknowledged that, and that we recognise the importance of building communities' trust and confidence in the police, and the importance of understanding their felt experience.

Part of the challenge around institutional discrimination as a topic is misapprehension and misunderstanding of what exactly it is. I therefore emphasise to the committee that we adopted the definition of institutional racism in the Macpherson report. In really simple terms, that definition means that, as an institution, our processes and our systems can sometimes unwittingly create a bias and a discrimination. That is what we want to focus on. It is important to be clear on the meaning of that. We recognise that the impact of institutional discrimination is relational and that it impacts people and communities.

I will give you a simple example to bring that to life. We recruit upwards of 700 officers every year and the new recruits undertake a residential training course over a period of 16 to 18 weeks. We recognised that, on reflection, there is a bias there based on gender and based on age. Taking a person away from their caring responsibilities for 16 to 18 weeks limits the number of people who might want to join the police. The solution to that was to introduce a non-residential training course. We now give new recruits the option of staying in our accommodation for their training or doing the training in a non-residential way.

There are four key elements to the policing together strategy. It is about leadership, learning, communication and communities. The communities aspect is incredibly important for us. We have a suite of ways in which we can engage with harder-to-reach local communities across Scotland. We have got community advisers. We recruit and employ community relationship specialists and we are working right across the organisation on that aspect. To help guide us across that path, we have what is described as a culture dashboard. That is the barometer that we are using to measure the progress that we are making, and I think that we are probably the only force in the UK at this point in time which has that. We are looking at the demographics within the organisation. What do the recruitment indicators tell us? What do the leavers indicators tell us? Where are we with absences? We cover modified duties, we look at grievances, and we look at victims of crime. We have a whole suite of measures on a Power BI tool that allows us to diagnose and analyse the circumstances within the organisation, and we use that in our discussions in the policing together oversight group within the SPA, where we talk about the progress that we are making.

The policing together strategy is the driving force in that regard. We have committed an assistant chief constable and a range of resources to support those areas, and again, a key element of that involves partnership working. That team will consider victims and health issues, including mental health. We are driving that work through and we analyse that on a very regular basis.

Colin Beattie: Looking at the terminology, there are obviously a lot of different threads to "institutional inequalities". Do you have an umbrella definition of what is meant by "institutional inequalities"?

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: I do not think that we have a bespoke definition, but we recognise that, when you embark on a journey away from institutional discrimination and towards being an anti-racist organisation, there is probably never an end point. A question that I frequently get asked is, "Have you reached the end of that?". I think that that aspiration will exist way beyond the chief constable's time and my time in policing.

However, the dashboard allows us to drill into a range of categories. We are continually taking feedback from the authority on other aspects. We have been fortunate over the past few years to establish a professional reference group and, in parallel to that, an independent reference group. It is a practice that has helped us a lot, including through the pandemic period. Recognising that some of those spaces are really difficult and complex, we bring in people with a broad, rich experience of those cultures and equality issues. We use some expertise around human rights on a daily basis now and we have a very senior solicitor who will work with us on bespoke matters. We are embedding a human rights approach into everything that we do and we are trying, through the culture dashboard and the policing together strategy, to bring about a better understanding of what you describe as inequalities.

Colin Beattie: What you are describing there sounds good. How do you cascade that down through your organisation?

11:00

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: We use a range of methods. We display information on the police computer screensavers; the chief and I, as well as others, do video blogs on the subject; we post items on our intranet; and so on. We have a real commitment to engagement through extended leaders forums, and this theme features very much in them. Rather than bringing line managers and leaders into the centre of the organisation, we go out to them, and we have a whole year's activity of engagement planned.

We also recognise that diversity staff associations are important to us, so we have established a collaboration group that brings all the staff associations together on an equal footing. We listen to disability groups; SEMPER Scotland, which represents our black and ethnic minority officers; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex associations. We bring all those associations together, because they are the voice of a lot of our officers.

Equally, the chief and I have hosted a range of truth-to-power sessions, where we allow officers to come in and spend time with us. That enables us to get our key message across, but, more importantly, it allows us to listen to the matters that they want to raise. That opportunity is open to officers and staff right across the country.

Colin Beattie: Thank you. My final question is on environmental sustainability, which I suspect falls within your broad portfolio. Police Scotland made a commitment to a target of achieving a 35 per cent reduction in CO_2 emissions, relative to the 2019-20 baseline, by the end of March 2026. There are still a couple of weeks to go, but what progress have you made in achieving that?

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: We have been working very hard in that space. A number of years ago, we recognised that environmental sustainability was important, so we have a dedicated team within the service. We set the target in 2021, and it was based on data from 2019-20. Our ambition was to achieve a 35 per cent reduction, but we have probably fallen short of that. Just now, we are tracking at a reduction of around 26 per cent.

A range of factors affect that. You will be aware that, when sustainability is measured, we are looking at scopes 1, 2 and 3. We have made a lot of progress with electricity and heat, but given that we have an ageing estate—some of our buildings are 70 years old—there is a limit to what we can achieve.

We have seen a shift in the guidance, particularly around scope 3, which relates to waste, water and business travel. We send officers all across the world. Only last week, I signed off on officers travelling to Australia for an extradition order. That type of thing has an adverse impact on our sustainability.

More positively, we have achieved a 16 per cent reduction in our use of electricity, a reduction of close to 20 per cent in our use of gas and a reduction of about 17 per cent in our use of fuel. When it comes to our ambition in relation to vehicles, we have a fleet of close to 4,000 vehicles, more than 25 per cent of which are completely electric. That brings its challenges, because the infrastructure in Scotland is difficult. It is also difficult to provide a 24/7 emergency policing service with electric vehicles, but we have ambition in that space.

I recognise that we will not achieve the target that was set five years ago by the end of this month, but I am confident that we will continue to be ambitious in that space.

Colin Beattie: Have you established new targets?

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: We will establish new targets for the period from 2026 to 2031 that will support the vision. We have been successful in drawing down specific additional funding for that, which has allowed us to look at lighting and other different arrangements. We have a sustainability manager, who keeps me in the right place.

However, although we remain committed to driving progress, I would argue that our ageing estate is having an adverse impact on our ability to fully achieve all that we want to achieve in that space.

The Convener: That leads us neatly on to the final series of questions, which will be put to you by the deputy convener, Jamie Greene.

Jamie Greene: Good morning. I have a lot of ground to cover, so feel free to give answers that are as relevant to the question as you wish—there is no need to elongate them in any way.

There are some basic themes that I would like to cover. Let us start with the theme of people and, in particular, police numbers. Chief constable, how many officers and staff do you currently have? Is the figure above, below or just about where you want it to be?

Chief Constable Farrell: I am looking at Alan Speirs, because he monitors the numbers on a monthly basis, but the number is currently just over 16,500.

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: We have a designated officer establishment of 16,500, and we have had six intakes during the year, which will refresh the number to slightly more than 16,500.

Jamie Greene: What about non-warranted staff?

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: The figure is between 5,500 and 6,000.

Jamie Greene: Is that on target or above or below your requirements?

Chief Constable Farrell: Let us look at the whole of the workforce and the mix within it—I am guessing that you will move on to the strategic workforce plan, so I will pre-empt that if I can. Policing is a complex business, and we do it on a national basis. In response to the audit, work is already being done to determine the right shape and size of the workforce and what mix of warranted and non-warranted powers we need, and to assess the threats and risks that are coming down the track that we need the capability to address, so that we can ensure that we are able to mitigate those risks.

There are some limitations on the workforce mix, some of which are described in the report. They include the policy of no compulsory redundancies and our inability to make big inroads when it comes to increasing police officer numbers. However, we will develop the strategic workforce plan for the complex landscape that we operate in and will identify the skills and capabilities that we particularly need as we move forward. Some of that featured in my request to the Government as part of the budget bid. We will work through the development of the strategic workforce plan and ensure that it is strongly connected with the medium-term financial plan.

We have started to look at shape, size and demand when it comes to our local policing functions. That work is under way. We are using AI to determine demand on an hourly basis and to ensure that we have the right capacity at the front line—whether that is response officers, community officers or our investigation hubs. That is the approach that we are taking to developing the plan.

However, I come back to the point about annualised budgets. The report acknowledges that the delivery of policing nationally, which is a £1.6 billion business, should not be constrained by a purely annualised budget. In the context of today's theme of best value, there should be scope for the organisation to have some flexibility across multiple years. That will be essential in ensuring that, as we meet emerging demands and threats, we are able to develop our workforce to meet the evolving landscape.

That is particularly important in relation to digital capability, because although technology helps the public sector to improve efficiency and effectiveness, it is also a route for people to commit crime—whether that is serious and organised crime, counter-terrorism and counter-state threats, or child exploitation online. All of that is driven by the ability to use technology to facilitate criminality, and we need to ensure that we keep pace with and stay ahead of that.

Jamie Greene: Thank you very much for that comprehensive answer. I am not entirely sure that it answered the question, which was about whether your current police officer numbers are at the right level. That is not a criticism; I would just like us to get an idea of that. I appreciate that there is churn.

Chief Constable Farrell: The process of developing the workforce plan will give me an accurate determination of those levels. As I said when I gave evidence to the Criminal Justice Committee, as part of our budget bid, we provided a detailed summary that highlighted some of the capabilities that we require to meet the threats that exist and to keep people safe.

Jamie Greene: It is interesting that the report identifies the arbitrary figure of 16,500, which is, in essence, a finance-based target. The report said—I am paraphrasing—that there was no evidence that 16,500 officers was the right number to deliver effective policing for the future. I understand that, on top of that 16,500, you have identified a need for a further 850 officers over the next two years and a further 350 staff—that is 1,200 more, in addition to the 16,500. However, there has been commentary to the effect that there is a lack of evidence that 16,500 is the right number.

How can you be in a position to ask your colleague who is sitting next to you for more

money and more resource budget for more people when you do not even know whether that is the number of people that you will need?

Chief Constable Farrell: I say to the committee that I provided a significant amount of evidence in relation to the requested uplift in police officer numbers and police staff numbers. The need for that uplift is based on demand, threat of harm, risk and the fact that we are in an evolving environment in which actions on the other side of the world have an impact on the streets of Scotland on a daily basis. We have seen that very acutely in the past 12 to 18 months, and we have seen it in the past week and a half, since the events in Iran.

Jamie Greene: Could you give an example to elaborate on that?

Chief Constable Farrell: In the past 12 months, we have seen protest activity on the streets of Scotland in relation to immigration issues and in relation to Israel and Palestine. Actions that are taken elsewhere can have a significant effect on local policing. People feel very strongly about such issues and they have the right to protest, but that represents a challenge for us, which involves a resource requirement.

Jamie Greene: When a mob turns up outside an asylum hotel, for example, the police have a duty to turn up and keep the peace if there are factions with different views—I understand that.

The general point that the Audit Scotland report makes is that 16,500 seems to be an arbitrary number. We would like to have a more evidence-based analysis of how many police officers and back-office staff you need and what the mix of officers and skill sets should look like, given the changes in crime and in the world. Perhaps I will re-read the *Official Report* after the meeting to see whether I can take any comfort from the answers, but it is an important point.

An issue that is linked directly to that is the changing nature of crime itself. Of course, we have some good news in that regard. I know that we have a habit of pointing only towards the negatives, but I believe that ministers are keen to make the point that there has been an overall reduction in crime rates in Scotland. However, there have been significant increases in some areas in the past five years that should be a massive cause of concern to us all. Sexual crimes, crimes of dishonesty, crimes against society and non-sexual crimes of violence have all risen year on year and over a five-year period. Some of those increases have been significant—for example, cases of rape and attempted rape have risen by as much as 26 per cent.

That points to a picture of a wider public who may feel safer because there has been a reduction in areas such as murder and homicide, but there has been a massive increase in other types of crime. What confidence do you have that the public can be reassured that, despite those hikes, policing is still doing its job?

Chief Constable Farrell: As you have described, there has been a rise in violence against women and girls, in particular. There has also been a rise in crime enabled by technology, whereby individuals have exploited the opportunities for crimes such as fraud and cybercrime. In that context, as I mentioned earlier, there is also the possibility of terrorist and counter-state threats. We are absolutely focused on those high-harm offences. On any day, in any week or month, we ensure that our attention is focused on the highest harm and areas of vulnerability where we need to safeguard individuals. That is a constant balance.

In addition, people are reporting offences against women and girls that were committed a while ago, which is an indication that they are confident that it does not matter whether the offending took place 10 or 20 years ago, because Police Scotland will take it seriously.

However, there is always the day-to-day challenge of balancing the need to address immediate vulnerability and immediate harm against historical offending. That is a constant balance for us. Part of my bid related to those areas of business.

11:15

Jamie Greene: Are you comfortable that the Government has responded accordingly and given you adequate resources to deal with that issue?

Chief Constable Farrell: We have received a budget that meets our needs to an extent. Although I am a realist about the fiscal position of the country, you would expect me to provide the strongest possible evidence base for my budget bid. That included the need for funding to strengthen our community policing across the country, which would allow us to have a stronger preventative element to the way in which we do our business. Everyone here would undoubtedly agree that prevention is better than cure. Front-line officers at a community level spend a proportion of their time doing prevention work, along with partners.

Jamie Greene: You will be aware of the number of high-profile cases of knife crime in our cities, which often involve groups of young men. A lot of casework is coming through in relation to that issue. People are genuinely concerned about and afraid of what seems to be a perceived, if not a statistical, increase in knife crime in some town centres. I thought that we as a country had dealt

with that issue many years ago, but there seems to have been an increase in gang activity, which puts the public at risk. We are not talking about the typical late Saturday nights here—such activity is taking place in the middle of the day on a weekday. Is that an area of concern for Police Scotland? What is being done about it?

Chief Constable Farrell: Regardless of whether the rise in the violence that you described is perceived, every individual case has a victim, which has a huge community impact.

We are very active and have strong partnerships in relation to knife crime. There is an education element to the issue and, often, a link with drugs. We are active and perform strongly in relation to tackling serious and organised crime and the supply of drugs. A clear focus for us, with partners, is diversion and prevention, and trying to get good, strong engagement with young people so that they do not find themselves in such positions.

Jamie Greene: I am glad that you mentioned that. As we are all aware, and as numerous committees of the Parliament have identified, the mortality rate associated with Scotland's issue with drugs is still unacceptably high. Arguably, that is a public health issue, but behind all that is a criminal issue of supply that meets demand. Major, serious organised criminal gangs are still operating in Scotland. There are production facilities in Scotland, and there is importation across the border from England and from overseas. It feels like the situation is getting worse, not better. The truth of that resonates in the number of people who are still dying on the streets of Scotland, particularly from synthetic drugs. I appreciate that Police Scotland will say that it takes the issue very seriously and is pumping a lot of resource into it, but the statistics speak for themselves. Again, can you give the public some comfort that Police Scotland is addressing the issue?

Chief Constable Farrell: Absolutely—it is a really strong focus. To illustrate that, operation portaledge addressed the feud across the central belt between April and the summer last year, and the convictions are starting to come through. Yesterday, three individuals went to prison for 25 years. That criminality is driven by the business of supplying drugs across Scotland, the UK and the whole world. Our techniques are very sophisticated in relation to that. There are strong connections with the National Crime Agency, Europol and Interpol. Alan Speirs referred to the extradition from Australia. That is how far our reach is in this space. When people who are wanted for serious and organised crime, often involving drugs, have fled Scotland, we will go after them and bring them back to this country, and they will face the consequences.

Over the next few months, you will see more convictions in relation to operation portaledge, which sends a strong message to the people who are involved in organised crime. We are getting guilty pleas from those individuals. The three yesterday all made guilty pleas because the strength of evidence against them is compelling. That speaks to the heart of our capability and the seriousness with which we take the issue.

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: On public health, every officer now carries naloxone. There is probably not a day when we are not administering naloxone somewhere in Scotland. We recognise the personal and individual impact of drugs, and what the statistics tell us about drug deaths in Scotland. We are committed to playing our part, and one element of that is through the carrying of naloxone.

Jamie Greene: Have any officers refused to carry it?

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: Very few. We always give officers the opportunity to refuse, but our experience is that the vast majority of officers are willing to carry it and, when appropriate, administer it.

Jamie Greene: That is very welcome. It talks to the wider point about resource planning, which was the premise of my original question, and the sorts of activities that Police Scotland is required to undertake.

At the beginning of the meeting, we talked about police officers linked arm in arm in a football stadium, dealing with thugs. On the other hand, we are talking about intercepting major international serious criminal gangs, using technology, which, I imagine, uses a very different skill set. That goes back to my original question, about your workforce planning, which, unfortunately, was criticised in the Audit Scotland report. When will we see your workforce plan? When will Audit Scotland and the future committees of this Parliament get some comfort that Police Scotland knows exactly what sort of people it needs, how many and when?

Chief Constable Farrell: We will develop the plan over the next 12 months. It is key that that is done in time for the next round of budget submissions.

You highlighted the complexity. On the depth of the national organisation, a huge swathe of good practice does not exist in this space. We will ensure that we can satisfy the recommendations, but we will need to build that this year. I have described some of the initial work that has been undertaken. However, policing operates in a complex environment: some of our functions are very visible to the public and many are not, as we

build capabilities that keep people safe online and across Scotland.

Jamie Greene: What is your current attrition rate? What is the average age of a police officer in Scotland and at what age do you start to lose people? We have kept a watching eye on that over the years and there is a feeling that we are losing many new recruits, who go through training, join the force and find it incredibly difficult, stressful or not rewarding for all the reasons that you mentioned. They might have to sit in an accident and emergency department for seven hours or deal with someone in their home who is having a mental health crisis, or they are abused or attacked. Surely that is not what people signed up to do in their careers with Police Scotland. I am keen to get some statistical information on whether the picture is getting better or worse.

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: I can give you the statistics and I can give you an opinion, as it can be quite subjective. Police Scotland is fortunate to be able to recruit people from the age of 18 into their mid-50s, so we have a real breadth and depth of experience and we have people who come from different walks of life.

The average age of a new recruit is about 25 or 26. On average, about 60 to 65 people leave at the end of each month and about three quarters of that is due to people retiring. I could spend a while talking about the complications and challenges of pensions, but the pension arrangements for police officers have changed. A larger number of people have chosen to retire slightly earlier, because pension arrangements allow them to do that.

About 25 per cent of our officers resign rather than retire. This might sound a little bit defensive, because I have the responsibility for recruitment and training. I meet every recruit and I will be at the oath-of-office ceremony tomorrow. Seventy-five new officers joined us this week. In my experience, younger officers who are joining the police do not necessarily see it as a career for life, but as a stepping stone, unlike myself and the chief constable. Their honest view would be, “This looks good for me for the next five to 10 years.” That can be misinterpreted as a sign that people think that it is a dreadful job.

The other side of the coin is that the demands that are placed on our officers are incredible and the job can be absolutely relentless. We use officers on their days off, they have to attend court on their days off, and they have to deal with incredible trauma. We have only to look at the past weekend: we had football, there were fires and road fatalities and, unfortunately, there were one or two murders across the country. Officers are the first people at those scenes. Sometimes, an officer will work out for themselves over a period of time that the job might not be for them. We do exit interviews and sit down with officers at the point that they leave, whether they have retired or they have resigned. In a large organisation, I am not massively concerned about the attrition rate. In many ways, it feels quite natural.

Jamie Greene: There is a perfect storm. You are losing people at the end of their careers who have been around a long time and have a lot of knowledge and expertise; some are retiring early; a large number are retiring due to ill health, which we have some statistics on; and a younger generation is coming in and are working for only five or 10 years, so they are not getting the cross-discipline experience that they would have got years ago. An officer might have served for two or three years in one unit, before moving to another unit. They would have continued to move around for 25 or 30 years. That is not happening at the same rate at the moment. Surely the inexperience has an operational impact on what policing looks and feels like.

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: It does. The quality of training that we provide for officers becomes really important, as well as our leadership offering. We have a number of programmes, including an accelerated leadership programme that we have been trying to develop, which is focused on how we get younger, less-experienced officers into the senior ranks more quickly so that we can start to bridge some of those gaps. Regrettably, we lose a lot of great experience from the service and there is no getting away from that. In a public sector organisation, it is very difficult to incentivise people to stay beyond retirement age.

11:30

Jamie Greene: Okay. We are short on time, so I have a brief question for Mr Rennick—we are not letting you get away lightly this morning. There was some criticism in the report, particularly of the Scottish Government, on the lack of a—let me get the terminology right—medium-term financial framework. That goes back to another question that was raised in the previous evidence session about single-year capital budgets. An organisation that has a capital backlog of more than £230 million and a further need for £500 million over the next 10 years for capital alone cannot operate in an environment of single-year budgets. Will the Scottish Government consider that issue in the next session of the Parliament? Would you consider three to five-year budgets for policing?

Neil Rennick: You will be aware that the Scottish Government published its medium-term financial strategy last June, as well as a parallel public service reform strategy and a sustainability strategy. In January, as part of the budget,

ministers also published spending review figures for revenue for the next three years and for capital for the next four years. However, given the wider budget context and the significant uncertainty and challenges regarding those figures, the forward projections of what the budget position would be were incredibly tight.

We will constantly engage with Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority on what the current and future budget needs are, and we will try to respond to those within the annual budgets and project forward into future years.

We face the same restrictions in relation to annualised budgets and the significant changes that can happen to budgets over time outwith ministers' direct control. To take just one example of that, I looked back at the 2022 spending review, which projected that policing would receive a flat-cash allocation over the subsequent years until 2026-27. In reality, thanks to some of the people around this table, we were able to increase revenue funding by £350 million, or 25 per cent. We have responded to the pressures that exist as far as we could and where we have been able to within the annualised budgets.

The amount of capital funding has also increased, from £45 million in 2022-23 to £86 million in 2026-27, which is a roughly 90 per cent increase. However, I recognise that there are other pressures and that the police service is needing to make difficult choices even with that increased level of capital funding.

Don McGillivray is more directly involved in that—I do not know whether he wants to add anything.

Don McGillivray: You have covered it all.

Jamie Greene: Yes, we are quite short on time. That £40 million increase in capital is fascinating. In that exact period when it was £45 million per year, I was jumping up and down asking for a new police station in Greenock, but the answer from Police Scotland was, "If we get more money from the Government, we will do it." Four years later, Police Scotland has more money from the Government, but is not doing it—I could go through the paper trail on that for another hour.

It seems that, even when capital is made available to Police Scotland, officers are still working in 50 or 70-year-old crumbling buildings that do not, for example, have custody capacity. That has an operational impact on their day-to-day jobs. I do not see how what the Government is saying about there being huge amounts of capital cash matches up with the £300 million backlog in estate maintenance and crumbling buildings. Why is there such a mismatch?

Chris Brown: I am happy for the chief constable to come in, but I do not think that there is a disagreement. There has been a significant rationalisation of the estate; Police Scotland has looked at rationalising its buildings as far as possible. However, it is inevitable that Police Scotland will need to consider prioritising its resources—for example, between digital investment, estates investment, greening the fleet and other options. There will always be adjustments around those things.

Capital pressures that exceed the overall budget that the Government has available are not unique to policing, and we try our best to respond to those pressures. As I say, there have been increases in capital funding, but I am not saying that that means that we have responded to everything that—

Jamie Greene: I appreciate that. I made a plug for my local police station, which I had to do in our final evidence session.

Chief Constable Farrell: It is important that we talk about the estate before we finish the meeting, so that we can give you the latest position on it.

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: There is no question but that an annualised budget is difficult. Getting an allocation in January for capital that we are going to have to spend in April is difficult. A big proportion of our capital is committed. We have some digital programmes that align to UK policing that we have to spend money on. We have to refresh the fleet and, at the same time, try to do work in the estates.

In the past year, we have spent every penny that we allocated to our estates team—139 projects—and we have delivered some sizable outcomes in that space. We have an ambitious capital programme, but it needs to be funded. Following the recruitment of a new chief estates officer, I asked her to develop an alternative plan that is based on a little bit less money.

I can see real progress around parts of our estates. We are enhancing some parts. We are doing new builds. We have made significant progress in Greenock, Mr Greene—

Jamie Greene: That is not what the officers say.

Deputy Chief Constable Speirs: —on an alternative location, which is promising. We are working collaboratively with local authorities to look at their estate, because everybody is in the same space. For us, solutions are not always about building a new building. However, we need a better estate. We are massively committed to that, but we are hugely constrained against a budget.

Jamie Greene: I appreciate that and Ms Vallance is sick of hearing from me on that issue. Do I have time for a final question, convener?

The Convener: A very short final question.

Jamie Greene: I have to ask because it has certainly been in the news in the past few months. My question is directed to the chief constable. Do you believe that serving police officers or staff of Police Scotland should be obliged to declare all and any interests, including memberships of clubs and societies, as has happened in the Metropolitan Police?

Chief Constable Farrell: I will probably say to you that I will come back to you on that issue. I have seen what the Metropolitan Police has done, but I have not considered it and it has not been the subject of UK-wide policing consideration. I would be reacting to the question rather than thinking it through in any great detail.

Jamie Greene: I much prefer an honest answer. I only raise it because some police officers who knew of your appearance here this morning approached me and said that they are concerned that it breaches their human right to privacy and interaction, and so on. That is why I mentioned it.

Chief Constable Farrell: Are you specifically talking about Masonic membership?

Jamie Greene: That might be part of it, but it is not solely related to that.

The Convener: That might be a question that, I presume, the Scottish Police Authority would also have some thoughts on.

We have come to the end of our time. I thank you for the evidence that you have given us this morning. This is the second-last meeting in public of this parliamentary session. I will say to Mr Speirs that our final meeting next week is with the accountable officer from the Scottish Public Pensions Agency. I know, Mr Hay, the firefighters, of whom you were once part, along with police officers, the NHS and teachers, are all caught up in the delays in the SPPA system. If you have any questions that you would like to put to the SPPA, Mr Speirs, drop us a note and we will do our best to raise them.

Neil Rennick: I should declare that my son is a junior admin officer in the Scottish Public Pensions Agency.

The Convener: Understood. Thank you very much for your time this morning, Alasdair Hay, Chris Brown, Don McGillivray, and director general Neil Rennick. I particularly thank you, chief constable, and deputy chief constable, for the time and the undertakings that you have given us this morning. It has been very helpful. We very much appreciate your willingness to answer some of the questions that were not strictly related to the report that you were asked to come here to talk about. We really do appreciate it.

With that, as the committee agreed earlier, the meeting will now move into private session.

11:39

Meeting continued in private until 12:00.

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