JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 27 May 2008

Session 3

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JUSTICE COMMITTEE
13th Meeting 2008, Session 3

CONVENER

*Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
*Nigel Don (North East Scotland) (SNP)
*Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
*Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP)
*Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD)
*John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Aileen Campbell (South of Scotland) (SNP)
Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab)
John Lamont (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO ATTENDED:

Kenny MacAskill (Cabinet Secretary for Justice)

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Professor Norman Bonney (Association of Scottish Community Councils)
William Campbell (Association of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches)
James Carr Watson (Association of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches)
George Denholm (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland)
Malcolm Dickson (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland)
Paddy Tomkins (HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Douglas Wands

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Anne Peat

ASSISTANT CLERK

Euan Donald

LOCATION

Committee Room 1

Scottish Parliament

Justice Committee

Tuesday 27 May 2008

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:16*]

Subordinate Legislation

Advice and Assistance (Limits, Conditions and Representation) (Scotland) Regulations 2008 (Draft)

The Convener (Bill Aitken): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the meeting. I remind everyone to switch off their mobile phones. There are no apologies, because we have a full turnout.

Item 1 is consideration of an affirmative instrument. I draw members' attention to the regulations and to the cover note. Prior to formal consideration of the motion to approve the regulations at agenda item 2, this agenda item gives members an opportunity to ask questions of the Cabinet Secretary for Justice. I welcome Kenny MacAskill, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice, and Chris Graham, Scottish Government team leader on access to justice. I invite questions of either Mr MacAskill or Mr Graham.

As there are no questions, we move to item 2, which is formal consideration of the motion to approve the regulations.

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): The draft regulations are one half of the story of reforming summary criminal legal assistance. The intention is to deliver necessary changes to regulations covering financial limits and conditions for advice and assistance, and assistance by way of representation. Those changes, which support the wider summary justice reforms that were implemented on 10 March 2008, are designed to secure speedier, more effective justice.

The regulations are limited to changes that require approval by affirmative procedure. Other changes, principally to the levels and structure of fees to be paid to solicitors, are to be laid before Parliament in a negative instrument by 6 June.

Although the reforms have not been universally welcomed by the legal profession, I have confidence in the effectiveness and fairness of the summary criminal legal assistance provisions, which were developed after detailed negotiations with the Law Society of Scotland and other representatives of the legal profession.

The overall effect of the regulations and the instrument that is being drafted and will be subject to the negative procedure is to reward early resolution of cases while preserving reasonable fee levels for necessary work. I have committed to involving the profession in monitoring and reviewing the impact of the new arrangements.

I move,

That the Justice Committee recommends that the draft Advice and Assistance (Limits, Conditions and Representation) (Scotland) Regulations 2008 be approved.

The Convener: As members have no comments or questions, I invite the cabinet secretary to wind up, if he feels that it is necessary.

Kenny MacAskill: I am happy to forgo the wind-up speech.

Motion agreed to.

Justice of the Peace Courts (Sheriffdom of Grampian, Highland and Islands) Amendment Order 2008 (SSI 2008/179)

The Convener: Item 3 is consideration of a negative instrument. Are members content with the order?

John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I have one question. I note that staff are being transferred from the district courts to the Scottish Court Service. Might any of the staff involved in the district courts have had a dual role within the local authority by working in the district court but also carrying out other duties, for example licensing board duties? Are there any issues about the straight transfer of those staff? I am sorry that I did not manage to get this question in sooner, but I received the paperwork only on Friday. I want to clarify whether there might be some issues about staff with split responsibilities.

The Convener: That is a possibility, bearing in mind the fact that some of the courts will not have a great deal of criminal work. Some local authorities might well have people performing dual functions. We do not have that information to hand, so we will write and obtain it.

Are members content with the order?

Members *indicated agreement*.

The Convener: I suspend the meeting briefly so that the witnesses for the next item can take their places.

10:20

Meeting suspended.

10:21

On resuming—

Community Policing Inquiry

The Convener: Item 4 is the second of the committee's scheduled oral evidence sessions on the community policing inquiry. I welcome Paddy Tomkins, Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary for Scotland, who is accompanied by Malcolm Dickson, the assistant inspector of constabulary for Scotland, and George Denholm, staff officer, HM inspectorate of constabulary for Scotland. We will proceed immediately to questions.

Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP): How would you define community policing and what are its key features?

Paddy Tomkins (Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland): Good morning. The written and oral evidence that members have received indicates that there is neither a broad understanding of nor a lack of consensus about what the term means. We indicate in our written submission that community policing should not be the only means by which community safety is delivered, although it might be part of it.

One concern that I would like to voice at this stage is that if we see community policing as a distinct discipline within policing, we do a disservice to our police officers and misrepresent the nature of policing in Scotland. You would be hard pushed to find a police officer at any stage of service, undertaking any role in the police service, who did not join to serve the community and does not believe that they are serving the community in whatever role they are undertaking.

My understanding—I am sure that members will correct me if I am wrong—is that the committee is exploring local involvement and participation with local communities. Rather than define community policing, we can see common themes. Community policing should support the delivery of safer communities, but it should not have all the responsibility for delivering safer communities. It should have a role in increasing public confidence in all aspects of policing and a key role in improving public satisfaction with service delivery from police forces in Scotland. It should also contribute to, but not have entire responsibility for, increasing public reassurance—that is, diminishing the fear of crime—and it should contribute, with others within and beyond the police service, to the reduction of crime in reality.

Stuart McMillan: Your submission refers to some research and states:

> "For instance, research has shown recently that some communities (e.g. commuters) are more assured by posters which declare (truthfully) that a high crime spot receives regular police attention than by actually seeing uniform officers themselves."

George Denholm (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland): We are making the point that there is an odd dynamic whereby increased visibility can, on some occasions, increase people's concerns. They think, "Why are police officers on my street?" The research from down south that we mention indicates that, rather than always trying to get additional yellow jackets—as we say—on the streets, poster campaigns can be productive.

Paddy Tomkins: Visibility, or impact on public consciousness, need not always be effected by the physical presence of an individual. There are other ways of conveying the effectiveness of policing, in the widest sense of the word, to travelling members of the community or members of the community more generally.

Stuart McMillan: Other committee members will probably agree with me that our impression so far—from visits that the committee has made, or visits that we have made as individuals—is that the presence of police officers on the street has a positive impact. Such a presence is probably more effective than, for example, posters on a billboard or at a bus stop. However, that impression seems to be different from the impression given by your written submission.

Paddy Tomkins: The two approaches are complementary. There are many complementary ways of reassuring the public. One way is not necessarily more effective than another. I know that the committee has heard from some academics, but other academics have found that public anxiety increases when people see a significant number of police officers on the street. To paraphrase St Augustine, we want lots of police officers, but not too many, and not so many that they scare us as opposed to reassure us.

Stuart McMillan: What should be the key roles and responsibilities of community police officers?

Paddy Tomkins: That question leads us back to the definition of community policing. Community policing can be regarded as a particular discipline, with officers trained for the role—although that is an issue in itself, given the nature of training. However, as the committee has heard, many different models of community policing exist across Scotland, across the United Kingdom, and internationally, therefore it is difficult to decide what the role of a community police officer is. In some parts of Scotland, some police officers have the label "community police officer"; in other parts of Scotland, such as north-west Sutherland, the community police officer is the police officer, and

would find it strange to have the label "community police officer".

I have spoken about key themes within community policing. If we were discussing the characteristics of community police officers, we would say that they are identifiable; that they are known to a geographic community, and perhaps to some people who work in that community, even if they do not live there; that they are contactable; that they are a point of focus; and that they might be a gateway into the police service. However, they are not solely responsible for delivering all policing services in the area.

Malcolm Dickson (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland): It is understandable that everyone who is interested in policing issues wants to be clear about the definitions. However, as Mr Tomkins has suggested, community policing means different things to different people.

We understand the concerns of politicians and others who are interested in policing issues, so in working with other stakeholders in policing—such as chief police officers, the Scottish Government and the conveners of police boards—we have tried, through the Government's additional police capacity project, to come up with more of a shared understanding of what community policing means. We have stopped short of defining it, but we have come up with a few principles, which we included in our written evidence.

The principles reflect some of what Paddy Tomkins said. Community police officers have to be accessible and present in the community, but that does not necessarily mean being visible. The officers will be visible when that is appropriate, and discreet when that is appropriate. They will communicate as widely as possible, and will consult, listen and respond. In the inspectorate, we have found that police forces have developed good, sophisticated ways of consulting communities and communicating with them, down to quite a local level. However, the way in which communities are responded to might have to be developed further. The public reassurance model of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland describes a good way of achieving that, and I commend it. Such communication will be part of wider efforts to make things better in communities.

We are not ploughing a lone furrow: to make things better in communities, we are working with others in the public sector, as well as with people in the voluntary and business sectors. I talk about communities, but that can mean communities of race, of gender or of sexual orientation. I am not talking only about geographic communities.

Trying to define community policing is like pinning the wave to the sand. It might be better to talk about the benefits that come from community policing.

10:30

Stuart McMillan: You spoke about working in partnership with others. Whichever of the various forms of community policing we are considering, do you agree that it is probably better that community police officers should not often be taken out of the community that they are serving? Sometimes, they are taken out quite regularly.

Malcolm Dickson: The challenge for all police managers is to ensure continuity and a consistency of approach. Sometimes, it might be preferable to keep the same officer in a post for longer than is beneficial for his or her career development. A balance has to be struck.

Police forces across Scotland have tried to red circle or ring fence community police officers—the ones whom they consider the most attached to particular communities. The word "abstracted" is often used. Forces have tried to prevent community police officers from being abstracted from their daily duties. However, even when officers are abstracted to other duties—such as policing football matches or other public events—they are still performing community tasks and are still serving the community.

As committee members will have gathered, I do not like to get too hung up on definitions. I am more interested in the means of policing. For me, all Scottish policing is community policing.

Paddy Tomkins: As we say in our written submission, the flexibility of the Scottish police service to meet all needs—from the needs of local communities right up to the needs of events such as G8—is a great strength. Such flexibility requires the ability to move resources about. However, we do not have a riot squad, and we do not have highly specialised, isolated outfits within policing; the same people, with experience of different aspects of policing, deal with either acute contingencies or with long-term relationships with communities. I regard that as a strength, although there can be frustrations. An occasional frustration is the perceived loss of individuals for a limited period of time.

To obtain additional police officers, some forces have entered into mutual funding arrangements that are outwith the normal police board funding arrangements. There are written memoranda of understanding between the chief constables and their respective local authorities. An effort has been made to find definitions, and to say that particular officers will be dedicated to particular work, except in extremis. By and large, that has worked well, but it can do so only while the constituency is quite small. Were the constituency

to grow as a proportion of policing overall, tensions would become more apparent.

The Convener: As you have correctly said, a problem exists with the definition of community policing. You were the first people to highlight the problem, in a 2004 report entitled "Local Connections—Policing with the Community", in which you highlighted

"a need for more consistent force and national strategies in this area."

Have your views changed?

Paddy Tomkins: Those were the views of my predecessor and HM inspectorate of constabulary for Scotland at the time. Yes, there should be national guidelines and a national exploration of good practice, but I feel some unease with the idea of a uniform model that would apply to all areas of Scotland. I know that the committee has heard about the neighbourhood policing model in England and Wales. I have reservations about that model. Scotland is diverse, and we are able to deliver the agreed benefits of community policing in very different ways, depending on the circumstances. Earlier, I talked about the difference between the situation in urban areas and the situation in north-west Sutherland.

The Convener: That is the classic illustration.

John Wilson: The committee is trying to find something to latch on to in our consideration of community policing, but some of the answers of the three gentlemen on the panel have given me cause for concern. We want to pin down accurately what we can do in relation to community policing.

Mr Tomkins, you referred to policing in north-west Sutherland being different from that in urban areas. How do you and the other gentlemen perceive community policing in different areas? How does policing in north-west Sutherland differ from that in the east end of Glasgow or the west of Edinburgh?

Paddy Tomkins: Mr Wilson, I promise that we are not trying to be unhelpful in assisting the committee to find a shared understanding.

My first point is about the intensity of the course of events and the rapidly moving nature of different communities, particularly in urban and sparsely populated rural areas. Although the geographic size of a place such as north Sutherland might be greater than an urban area, and the community more dispersed, individual information networks and lines of communication are that much smaller because of mutual recognition and understanding. Clearly, the pace of events is considerably different in areas such as east Glasgow and some areas of Dundee and Aberdeen. The demand for response policing there is different, because of the need to intervene on acute occasions.

I characterise community policing in urban areas as being more about relationship management. I mean that not in the cynical sense of having to placate communities but in the commercial sense of recognising the importance of building mutual understanding between the deliverers and consumers of goods or services. As I say in our written submission, many police officers are unhappy with the idea of serving customers, but the reality is that people are paying taxes and getting a policing service in response. In urban areas, community police officers, as opposed to those who are engaged in moving from call to call in response policing, are managing relationships and, in some ways, being a gateway into the broader range of policing services, much as a general practitioner is, if I can use the health service and primary and secondary care as an analogy.

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): Concerns have been raised with us—and are often raised—about community policing not being seen as part of core policing, and performance management indicators not fully recognising the breadth of community policing activities. Are such concerns justified in Scotland? If so, how should they be addressed? For example, we have heard that good community policing is sometimes about not so much the number of arrests made or targets achieved as the number of situations defused. Is there a problem and, if so, how do you address it?

Malcolm Dickson: You mentioned performance management. No doubt the Scottish policing performance framework has been explained to you. It is a joint venture progressed by all those who are interested in policing, and it is to be commended, because it is unlike what happens elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

At the moment, the framework is modest, and you are right to point out that it does not yet capture some of the qualitative aspects of community policing and other aspects of policing. However, is it not always the case that quality is more difficult to measure than quantity? The framework is about the longer-term value of community policing. Paddy Tomkins used the health service analogy of the general practitioner. They do not attend emergency calls; the out-of-hours services, paramedics or ambulance crews do that. To some extent, response policing is a bit like that, but community policing is at the centre of it all.

In urban areas, individual officers are separated out, and response officers respond to emergencies and stick on the Elastoplast 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Community policing

still exists, and both types of policing have to feed from each other using intelligence and other information. The fact that officers often work in the same buildings also helps. So the two types of police officer do not necessarily see themselves as two different types. A community policing constable and a response policing constable can be asked to do the same job on the same day; there is no division of labour and one is not going to say, "That's not my job."

Bill Butler: Is there no culture clash? Are the two types always complementary or are there tensions?

Malcolm Dickson: I do not think that there are tensions because, after all, most—practically all—officers will have done each job at one time or another. In particular, outside Scotland's urban centres, most police officers do everything. We call them generalists or general practitioners. A distinction cannot be made, because they all deliver community policing.

I go back to the question about measuring the benefit of community policing. The policing performance framework tries to build on the fact that police forces survey and consult, so it includes some qualitative survey results on how people feel about the service, that is, user satisfaction. That can be built on in the future.

The framework's current limitation is that we have tried hard not to impose an additional burden on police officers. We do not want them to be creating five-barred gates and having to manually count things—well, as little as possible, anyway. On the horizon is an information platform and information technology solution that will mean that all Scottish forces will be able to data mine automatically the information that they collect. At that point, which is a couple of years off, we will have the opportunity to provide better qualitative information.

Having said that, the best measures of the outcomes of community policing are not police measures but measures of the benefits to the community of partnership working in community planning. Community policing feeds best into community planning and recognising the longer-term problems that need to be solved, some of which are indicated by the short-term emergencies and some of which go far deeper.

Paddy Tomkins: Given all the caveats that we have already discussed about community policing, its effectiveness is not just about service delivery, how many reports are made or how many people are arrested. It is about the catalytic role that effective police officers play in bringing together aspects of the community, public service delivery and the private sector to act as a whole in producing benefits for local communities or energising community members. There are examples of that in just about all areas of Scotland. As Malcolm Dickson said, it would be a mistake to focus on the how much; we should consider the totality of the police's influence on local communities.

Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): Malcolm Dickson said that outside the urban centres, police officers are both response officers and community officers, so clearly those roles are separate in the cities.

We have heard evidence that Chicago has neighbourhood teams made up of response officers and community officers. As I represent a city beat—if I can put it that way—I have had occasions when community officers have been on the ground working on a particular issue for a period of time, but a response team has come in and has not known the history of what has gone on, which has caused tension in the community and, sometimes, tension for the community officers when they have come back into play.

One of the apparent benefits of the Chicago approach was that it had a positive impact on abstractions, whereas in most of our cities—certainly in west Edinburgh—local chief officers have to deal with a large number of abstractions to cover marches, games and so on. If officers are doing both jobs outside the urban centres, why are we not going that way in the cities?

10:45

Malcolm Dickson: You point to a problem that has been exacerbated in recent times, because we all expect information to be better managed. The information management systems that police forces have employed up until the present day have tended to examine individual incidents or contacts as isolated events. As you rightly point out, that can mean that response officers do not have the full picture all the time.

We hope that the next generation of information technology will allow police forces to view the bigger picture, so that a response officer who attends a call will not view it as a one-off event if there is a history. There will be connections to community problems, and an understanding of what community police officers—who are working separately but in the same place and as part of the same team—have agreed with community leaders or others who work in the community. There is a difficulty, as you mention, but it can be overcome.

There are more abstractions in cities than elsewhere because there are more extraordinary demands on police officers for one-off events. The logistical management of resources will always be a balancing act. If you are suggesting that community officers and response officers can work

together as part of a dedicated team, I say that that happens, but response officers necessarily work 24 hours, whereas community police officers tend to work during waking hours in order to be on hand, accessible and visible to the community.

Bill Butler: With regard to police community engagement, what evidence is there of different mechanisms being used throughout Scotland? How effective are such mechanisms? Your written submission mentions community participation, community planning, the Dumfries and Galloway annual consultation day and an online mechanism. Can you elaborate on that?

Paddy Tomkins: Yes, indeed. As you imply in the phrasing of your question, a wide range of participative arrangements and contact means is available, and those means are increasing and diversifying. That is a good thing. As I said in my previous evidence to the committee, the police must make themselves more accessible and explicable to all sections of the community.

There are examples of police forces reaching out to individuals and beyond institutions. It is easy to engage with councils, although I am sure that councils would say that they want the police to engage more with community councils—I know that the committee will hear later from community councils that would like more engagement. There are also examples in Edinburgh of police, as part of their consultative arrangements, talking to leading schoolchildren, such as head girls and head boys, not just individually but in a group. As I said earlier, the police have a catalytic role; they are helping different sections of society to communicate with one another, to get a view into one another's worlds and to empathise more effectively. That can be very powerful. There is a wide range of opportunities, and it is growing all the time.

Malcolm Dickson: The public reassurance model that ACPOS has adopted throughout Scotland offers a way forward. It was piloted by Strathclyde Police and it is a good model for communities in which something negative is going on or there is a particular problem. It is not necessarily a model that would be used for every community in Scotland—as Paddy Tomkins said, different models work in different places—but it describes the ways in which a community can be engaged and the police force can listen and help the virtuous cycle of communication.

Bill Butler: To what degree should a community be able to influence operational matters? Mr Tomkins, do you want to have a shy at that?

Paddy Tomkins: I will have a go.

Effective consultation is important in order to understand community priorities, but part of that consultation also involves the police communicating effectively the range of demands on them. Some aspects of policing that rarely come to public attention except in the wake of a catastrophe include, for example, the management of serious sex offenders, child protection, the investigation of serious crime—I could go on, but members will know the whole range of activities for which the police are responsible. People understand that if they are given the context.

In the past, the community police officer has been used too much as a means of—to borrow a word from Malcolm Dickson's earlier evidence—suppressing, or allaying, community misgivings at a local level without necessarily being equipped to set the wider context within which the police are operating. I have certainly found that when we are open and share sometimes uncomfortable truths about limitations on resources or competing demands, communities and police boards are entirely understanding. That is part of accountability—it is not just about responding to a particular challenge but about explaining the broader circumstances and drivers that might impact on a police force.

Bill Butler: I have one last question. I know that we cannot just take another model and plant it in Scotland but, given what you have said, are you impressed by the salient features of the Chicago model of police community participation? Can we learn anything from it?

Paddy Tomkins: Yes, of course. I do not mean to be trite, but we can learn things from everywhere. It seems that we are touring the major American cities: we have moved from New York to Chicago as the answer to our present concerns. There are already examples of aspects of that model being adopted in Scotland, in advance of England and Wales, such as shared funding for policing activities in a broad sense, by which I mean policing working with council housing, the not-for-profit sector, voluntary groups and so on. It is happening in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and it is increasing in range and application throughout Scotland. That is very much to be encouraged. It is interesting that that has come not from a national template but from the negotiation of local needs, abilities and capacity. We—collectively, as a nation—should apply our energy to support that sort of organic development to meet particular local needs.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): Good morning, gentlemen. Earlier, in response to questioning from the convener, you discussed the success of community partnerships. Can you share with the committee any suggestions or thoughts on what the key ingredients are in creating a successful

partnership between the police and other agencies, including voluntary sector groups?

Paddy Tomkins: Yes, indeed. I am sure that my colleagues would like to contribute on that, as it is of central importance to the debate. I do not mean to appear glib, but the first thing is to follow the money. The money is what drives the partnership and makes it effective. Good will and a shared understanding of challenges are great, and local consultation arrangements and the sharing of intelligence are good, but money is of central importance.

In the past—this is a particular risk, as the committee has heard in relation to the neighbourhood policing model in England and Wales—disciplines that should be working together to further community wellbeing, in the terms of the Scottish legislation, have often had overarching objectives, targets and priorities set for them that have militated against effective partnership working. For example, health should be a key partner in working with police. It is in many aspects, such as drugs work, but there are other drivers such as standards of clinical excellence and waiting lists that can distract people in the field of health from working effectively as partners in areas of business that they would not necessarily consider to be central to their overall remit.

I do not say that to denigrate the field of health in any way—I have worked effectively with chief executives of health boards in Scotland on areas of more explicitly shared concern such as child protection. We need to consider whether there are any competing targets that are fragmenting rather than unifying effort, and whether there are mechanisms that are open to us to allow shared funding, which encourage co-location and pooled effort towards shared targets and objectives. We have touched on examples of that, such as the new West Lothian Council headquarters at Livingston, which will also house courts and the police.

A key strength is that the human interaction that takes place when people are brought together starts to break down corporate or institutional boundaries to effective partnership. We have witnessed that powerful effect throughout Scotland. Sometimes it happens by necessity, given the nature of the environment, and sometimes it happens by design, but wherever we have witnessed it there has been a positive influence. Shared funding, co-location, a shared understanding of one another's needs and sharing information can bring about an overall benefit for individuals and communities.

Cathie Craigie: Money makes the world go round and you said that it makes for good partnerships, but budgets are tight in every organisation and there is never a bottomless pit. Is there evidence that money can be better targeted when organisations come together and share costs?

Paddy Tomkins: Evaluation continues to be a challenge for the approaches on which we have touched lightly during this discussion.

I did not mean to suggest that we need more money, because I acknowledge the constraints that you rightly outline; I was talking about using existing budgets and having greater porosity between budgets and institutions—the convener likes the word "porosity", so I ask the clerks to note that I used it. There could be greater freedom for senior officials, when there is democratic oversight, to move money, share money and pool budgets to deliver services, rather than take the compartmentalised, silo approach with which we are all familiar and might have been frustrated, not just because we work in those services but because we are consumers of services—I am thinking about my family's experiences.

Malcolm Dickson: Different levels of partnership in Scotland might lead to difficulty in future. At national level, the partnership between ACPOS, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers and other such organisations is developing strongly. At local community planning level, it is clear that partnership involves the 32 local authorities, but we must throw into the mix the eight police authorities and six joint police boards.

It is sometimes difficult for members of police boards to see where they fit into the national picture and how they can contribute to partnership working. Of course, board members' primary responsibility is to hold police forces to account but, given that members are local councillors, they quite naturally consider how they can contribute to partnership working. There is a challenge in that regard. I am not saying that partnership working is impossible and should be thrown out, because some partnership working is going very well. However, for the police, partnership working is perhaps easiest in Fife and in Dumfries and Galloway, where there are unitary authorities.

Cathie Craigie: Your comments nicely bring us on to community planning. In the submission that you kindly provided to the committee, you talked about how community policing ranges from street football—which you hail as a success although you question whether it is the best use of police resources and time—to the provision of information about how you would approach a mass evacuation in the event of a threat. You also mentioned the sharing of accommodation in Tayside. There are different examples of community policing throughout the country. Are

there opportunities to develop the community planning model so that innovative ideas on community policing can be taken up? Should we be focusing on community policing or should our focus be wider?

11:00

Malcolm Dickson: In our submission, we said that, as models of community planning throughout Scotland mature, there is perhaps an opportunity to strengthen partnerships by making community safety and crime reduction a statutory responsibility. That does not mean that we should necessarily take the approach that has been taken in England and Wales, although politicians in Scotland have considered such an approach.

The approach is worth reconsidering, because police forces in Scotland are aware that community planning partnerships have adopted the language of reducing crime and promoting community safety without always taking action in that regard. When crime figures are published in Scotland and throughout the United Kingdom—and perhaps in most democracies—the police forces are at the forefront of media attention. We are asked what we are doing about rising crime, and we reply that we are trying to solve crimes and tackle the issue crime by crime, but reducing crime is less a police responsibility than it is a joint partnership responsibility. We need to get that message across, so that community planning partnerships do not just use the language but take responsibility for reducing crime and promoting community safety.

Local government can do much more to reduce crime than individual police activity can do. Equally, national Government can take action to reduce crime. For example, car crime reduced not because of better policing but simply because the UK and Scottish Governments put pressure on car manufacturers. When I was a young cop, car crime was a huge problem for communities throughout the UK; now it is far less of a problem.

Cathie Craigie: Is there room for further legislation? Is legislation required if we are to make the approach work?

Malcolm Dickson: We are talking about an area in which consistency throughout the country would not damage local relationships. A statutory responsibility to understand an area's problems by using a common model—an audit or scan or whatever—and to tackle the issues would not be difficult to frame and would add weight to developing models of community planning throughout the country.

Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab): Paddy Tomkins talked about local innovation and mentioned a housing association that provided additionality in relation to police funding, which benefited one community. In areas where officers are not involved in such activity, communities will not benefit from innovative approaches—there are bound to be gaps. How can we ensure that communities benefit from innovative approaches that are taken elsewhere?

Paddy Tomkins: In my previous life as chief constable of Lothian and Borders Police, we discussed with the police board how we would embark on a project in which additional funded officers would undertake particular roles. Additionality is a key issue, as you said. Also, as such approaches have proved effective in the areas that elected members—with the help of shared information from the police and officials—identified as being most in need, evaluation has led to further investment in such activity. As you said, it is not just about policing; it is about more effective work with local council services, the not-for-profit sector and so on, on the basis that we have discussed.

We cannot deliver that additionality to everyone simultaneously; I envisage its being delivered through organic growth. The opportunity for innovation is available to every community. With all the caveats that I have given, I think that community policing has a role to play in giving communities the capacity to innovate. It is not just about the more affluent and more politically aware communities profiting from community policing; it is about equipping communities at all levels of affluence or advantage to take more of a grip of their own concerns and demand more of the services for which they pay and of which they are consumers.

Paul Martin: But you accept that the local framework that has geographical responsibility in some areas might not be a local housing association; for example, in the past, it might have been a social inclusion partnership. Because of the nature of local framework decision making, some areas may be unable to tap into the additional funding. In addition, the performance of the local police force may not be at the required standard. How do communities in such circumstances take part in innovation? That is an issue. It is all very well for us to talk today about the positives that are happening but, throughout Scotland and the UK, there will also be negatives. How do communities with negative experiences invest and take part in the innovation when there is no framework for them to do that?

Paddy Tomkins: Forgive me if I misunderstand your question, but the point was made earlier that the legislative framework for community wellbeing exists for everybody. We must take examples of good practice from the areas in which they are being explored and developed, and bring them to

bear in areas in which there are gaps. We obviously need a project that identifies the gaps and closes them. However, that cannot be done at the outset or we would end up with a one-size-fits-all approach that might not be appropriate for all communities. I agree that, at the start, greater effort will be expended in some areas, but the lessons from that should be rolled out and adjusted appropriately for local need as quickly as possible.

I cannot think of an area of Scotland whose elected members would not say, rightly, "Well, they're getting this and learning those lessons. Why aren't we?" Indeed, chief constables and local council officials have a responsibility for those areas, too. I am not saying that the current model is where we stop. I think that it should be a means of identifying and closing gaps as quickly as possible.

George Denholm: That is an important point, which we made in our submission. For communities that often lack a voice, there is a role for properly configured and revitalised police boards with the capacity to play their part. We spoke earlier about various forms of consultation throughout Scotland. However, our preferred option is for locally elected representatives on police boards to play their part in dealing with the kind of inequalities that Paul Martin's question highlights.

The Convener: We have quite a lot still to get through, and I am getting a wee bit anxious about time. I ask the panel to give one response to the remaining questions. At the end, I will give the opportunity for any panel member to contribute briefly on any issue.

John Wilson: What key challenges face the police in trying to implement effective community policing strategies, whatever shape or form they take? How important are issues of police culture, management and leadership and resources in delivering community policing?

Malcolm Dickson: The key challenge is to understand partnership working better. I was encouraged to hear ACPOS talk recently about understanding the overall aims and objectives of other national and local services. One of the keys to community policing is understanding where the policing bit fits in making communities better—for example, understanding what policing contributes to health, education or whatever. The intellectual and cultural challenge is for police forces to recognise that their role is not just to be law enforcers and people who try to make others safe but to contribute to wider community wellbeing. I am sorry, but what was your second question?

John Wilson: You mentioned the cultural aspect, but I also want to know about the role of management and leadership and resources in delivering community policing.

Malcolm Dickson: The managers recognise that aspect. That seems to be happening now, or at least the message is certainly coming from the police leadership in Scotland that the police service is not just ploughing a lone furrow. The challenge is to use resources a bit more imaginatively—for example, Paddy Tomkins talked about co-locating—so that police officers sometimes do things that officers did not do in the past in order to achieve greater community wellbeing. However, there is always the danger that that approach will be misunderstood or that it will be felt to have too much emphasis. However, police officers of the future will have to be part of that wider effort.

Nigel Don (North East Scotland) (SNP): Good morning, gentlemen. I wonder whether we can extend that and take a step back to the other end of the same argument. Within the policing family, what do you think police officers in particular must contribute, recognising that the partnerships that you are speaking about have many other aspects? What do you regard as the distinctive role of the police constable in all that?

George Denholm: We mentioned in our submission something that came from fieldwork that a colleague and I were involved in. We spoke to young officers who were perhaps attracted to the service because of media images of the kind of reactive policing that we see on "The Bill" or "The Sweeney". We make the point in the submission that it is ironic that we work very much within a consent model, which we suggest is at the heart of community policing, but we attract young officers with perhaps an entirely different view of the policing service, which has been formed by the media. We suggest that the role of the service is to realign that perception. Someone else spoke about the tension between community and reactive policing. Perhaps one of the service's roles is to ensure that people understand that we are a service of consent and not a service on the European gendarmerie model.

Nigel Don: I think that we could be here all morning on that issue, but I know that the convener does not want us to be, so thank you.

Paul Martin: From the panel's experience, what distinctive contribution can community policing initiatives make in reducing crime and antisocial behaviour in our communities?

Paddy Tomkins: I hark back to my earlier point about the catalytic role. One of the unique aspects of policing is the glimpse that we get into people's lives across the social spectrum and the range of human experience. That helps very much in building empathy and understanding between

individuals in communities and, indeed, individuals in organisations and institutions that serve communities. There is also a degree of urgency. We have been talking about cultural aspects; the police service has a can-do and do-it-now culture that is, at its worst, regarded as interventionist but which means that the police, in seeking to up the pace of events, can lend energy to endeavours. Perhaps I have not fully grasped the point of Mr Martin's question, but I think that the police bring those aspects to a partnership.

Paul Martin: Shift patterns, leave and other aspects present challenges to the design of community policing. How do such aspects fit in with tackling antisocial behaviour? Our criminals do not work shift patterns, so how does our community policing framework fit into that?

Paddy Tomkins: We would have to go beyond the individual police officer who, for the reasons that you stated, will not be there all the time, and inculcate what is required in everybody working in a particular area. One of the models of community policing in Scotland that is being developed in Strathclyde by Chief Constable Steve House might be thought of as geographical policing. That harks back to evidence that you heard from Chicago, in which the differentiation between community policing and response policing was not understood. It is policing, but it is done on a geographical basis in close partnership with other agencies. That approach is being developed in Strathclyde Police. It is starting to address the issues that Paul Martin raised in his question regarding the more geographically defined nature of policing, so that the understanding of what is going on in that area is shared among individuals and is not just the responsibility of one person who is labelled as the community police officer or who is responsible for relationships with local communities. There is a passing of the baton between shifts and so on.

11:15

The Convener: We cut Mr Dickson off a bit early. Is there anything that you would like to add to the three answers that we have just had?

Malcolm Dickson: I think that it was Mr Martin who asked about the unique contribution that the police can make to reducing crime. As Paddy Tomkins said, the police can play a catalytic role.

As I mentioned, it is ironic that, although the police are a major player, police activity by itself does not reduce crime much. It can do so in localised areas and for short periods of time, but it cannot reduce the overall levels of crime that are experienced in Scotland as a whole or in particular regions. The irony is that the police probably understand crime better than anyone else does. The contribution that they can make is to explain what is going on and to inform community planning partnerships about what seems to be causing the crime and what the underlying trends are. The police's ability to make that analysis is unique—no other agency has it.

The Convener: Do you have anything to add, Mr Denholm?

George Denholm: A committee member said that the committee is looking for something concrete to latch on to. My closing point is that there are certain perils with community policing, which we have encapsulated in our responses. There is a certain peril in coming up with definitions of what is and what is not community policing, and what is and what is not a community officer.

The Convener: Paul Martin has a brief final question.

Paul Martin: Mr Tomkins mentioned that there were negative aspects to the work in England and Wales of the National Policing Improvement Agency. Is there anything positive that we can take from that experiment in England and Wales?

Paddy Tomkins: By all means. As we discussed earlier, there are positive strands to that work, such as the efforts to stabilise community police officers within particular areas and the notion of geographical policing. Scotland is ahead of England and Wales as regards the broad participation in community policing that we have discussed.

However, although there are positive strands to the work of the NPIA, I am worried by the template that is being advocated. I know that the witness from whom the committee heard said that it was not a one-size-fits-all approach, but if that is the case, why is there a model that says that such a template will be in place in every police area in England and Wales? There are certain universally applicable themes, but I am extremely concerned that we could unintentionally stifle rather than promote the local innovation that we talked about.

The Convener: We intend to do our bit to ensure that Scotland is well ahead of the field on all policing matters. It is evidence such as that which we have received from Mr Tomkins and his colleagues that will enable us to do that. Thank you very much indeed for your attendance.

11:18

Meeting suspended.

11:19

On resuming—

The Convener: I have much pleasure in welcoming the second panel. William Campbell is the chairman of the Association of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches and James Carr Watson is its treasurer. Professor Norman Bonney is vice-president of the Association of Scottish Community Councils. Thank you for attending. We will move straight to questioning.

Paul Martin: Good morning. What do the panel members understand by the term "community policing", and what do they consider to be the key roles and responsibilities of community police officers?

William Campbell (Association of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches): Before I answer, let me thank the committee for the invitation to give evidence.

The committee has heard about different models of community policing. We have found that there are different feelings on the subject among Scotland's neighbourhood watch community. We contacted roughly 2,500 neighbourhood watch members before we compiled our answers, so I am giving a general view rather than speaking on my own behalf.

There is general agreement that "community policing" means the provision of designated officers to cover a specific area of a town or city or, in rural areas, several villages or hamlets. Those officers will be seen as part of the community rather than as a separate entity. They will probably patrol on foot or on bicycles—we know that that happens in Coatbridge, for example—and will communicate with members of the public while they are on patrol. They will not just keep themselves to themselves; they will talk to the public.

Community policing builds up trust between the public and the police, and when it is backed up by the work of neighbourhood watches and community councils, quite a potent force is created for tackling crime and the fear of crime. It is also viewed as the branch of the police service that is best equipped to tackle antisocial behaviour. Through community-led intelligence and work on projects in the community, it is able to tackle issues such as underage drinking and local crime. Other branches of the police—those that we have heard being described as the response element—would normally receive intelligence on drug dealers, for example, and would act as necessary. That is the general view of community policing.

Paul Martin: Were the responses that you received consistent? I appreciate that you have provided a comprehensive response, but were there any perceptions of what a community police officer was that surprised you? Did rural communities have different perceptions from urban communities?

William Campbell: We received one or two strange replies. One area—which had never seen a community officer—thought that community policing involved the community doing the policing on its own. However, generally speaking, the answer that I gave reflects the consensus across seven of the police regions—we did not get a response from the Northern Constabulary area.

Paul Martin: I take it that you will keep those responses anonymous.

William Campbell: Yes.

Paul Martin: What was the feeling about the level of priority that the police give community policing? Were some communities concerned about officers being abstracted from what they would consider to be front-line duties to perform other duties that were a priority for forces?

William Campbell: On the neighbourhood watch side, the general feeling is that although neighbourhood policing has not been given the priority that it deserves to be given, there have been improvements over the past year or two.

Abstractions happen. I live in Fife, and we lose community officers as a result of open golf championships and football matches. However, as has been said, that is part of community involvement.

An issue that worries us is the moving of officers from one area to another to handle a major incident. For example, police might be taken from central Fife to west Fife because of a shortage of officers to investigate a crime such as a murder or a rape. The scale of such an investigation calls for officers to be brought in to assist the local force. Normally, community officers are the first to go.

A member of the first panel mentioned the G8 summit, which involved not only community officers but almost every officer. A problem with such an event is that if a community officer gets injured, he will be off work for a reasonable amount of time. That officer will have built up a personal relationship with his community. When another officer who is unknown to the community is put in, the trust is no longer there. It will take time to build up the same level of trust and communication.

The Convener: Would you like to comment, Professor Bonney?

Professor Norman Bonney (Association of Scottish Community Councils): The Association of Scottish Community Councils attempts to represent some 1,200 community councils

throughout Scotland. We have a limited budget, so we can employ only one part-time administrator to support our activities. Within that constraint, however, we are able to get a picture of the relationship between the police and community councils throughout Scotland. Our executive committee discussed the matter and we received some representations in response to a call to our members.

I point out that community policing goes on throughout Scotland at community council meetings. I do not think that people appreciate that community councils are a valuable resource. In Scotland, about 1,200 community councils meet monthly and some 12,000 people are involved in those meetings. There are about 37 community councils per local authority and they are a valuable local resource. Of all the public service agencies, it is the police who most recognise the value of community councils.

I have attended meetings of the west end community council in Edinburgh for more than a decade. I have helped to promote community councils in the city of Edinburgh and I am increasingly involved in national activities that relate to community councils. It is clear that an important element of community policing goes on at community council meetings throughout Scotland. A police officer will be present at the great majority of the monthly meetings. There are discussions about issues that trouble the local community, and the police are often sensitive and responsive to the issues that are raised.

Community councils are worth developing both in relation to police services and more generally. I heard a presentation by Professor Wesley Skogan on the Chicago model of neighbourhood policing. I believe that the committee also heard a presentation on that. Under that model, the police convene neighbourhood meetings and regularly report back to neighbourhoods. However, I suggest that, here in Scotland, we already have an institution that does that to a large extent and has the potential for much further development to promote communication between local communities and the police.

Paul Martin: How much have discussions and other interaction between police officers and community council members changed over the years? I have been an elected representative since 1993 and the same policing issues were discussed at the first community council meeting that I attended and the most recent one, which I attended last week. Do we have to accept that we will always be talking about abstractions? Do we have to condition ourselves to accept that police officers have a wide range of responsibilities?

Professor Bonney: Some of the points about difficulties with community policing that were made at the committee's previous meetings have also been brought to our attention, but in general community councils recognise that there is a valuable relationship with the police service at present. Community policing is working in that respect.

You are right to say that the issues that concerned community councils 10 years ago still concern them today. I note that the same is true of discussions about community planning in the Scottish Parliament. There have been discussions for the past decade or more about making community planning work, and we are still talking about the same issues. There are major problems.

I was interested to hear one of the representatives of HM inspectorate of constabulary for Scotland say that the role of the police is to work with others to improve local communities. That is precisely what community councils endeavour to do, and there is great potential to be exploited, both in relation to police services and more generally.

The Convener: Professor Bonney has already answered the next question, but I ask Mr Campbell to comment. I add that we are extremely impressed by the lengths to which you went to circulate information to your membership and get full information back on what is happening throughout Scotland.

There appears to be variance in the commitment that police forces—and indeed divisions within police forces—put into community policing. Do you have a comment on that?

William Campbell: I am one of the lucky ones. I stay in an area where we have high involvement by community officers. We have blue light discos for the young and other youth diversionary things such as street football. In June, we will have an open-air disco in the local glen—the event has been held for the past two years. The community police are very involved where I live but, as you say, that is not common.

I look to my left. Mr Watson also lives in Fife, but his experience might show the difference where he lives.

11:30

James Carr Watson (Association of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches): I also thank the committee for inviting us here.

What Mr Campbell says is true. I am only 8 miles away from him, in Kirkcaldy. People in his area are fortunate to have all those things on their doorstep. The problem comes back to community cops getting transferred or moved away; there is no continuity. I represent Kirkcaldy, Kinghorn and Burntisland, and we cannot get a local person in

post to take on the community officer role. We have one now, but there is often apathy. The people who come just give up and say that there is no point.

We have tried to do various things, like a fashion parade. That is not my department, but we tried to get the women involved in that, and the young teenagers. We did well—we raised more than £2,000 from the last event that we had. However, community officers move away to other posts. We do not seem to be able to control them. When we ask where they are, we are told, "He's off sick," but we do not get anybody else. It is the old story. We are told, "We'll get word back to you," but the communications are not there.

All local areas should be singing from the same hymn sheet. We should work together so that we know what others are doing. A community policeman is a rare person to have. He is a special type of officer. Perhaps community policing should be a special service in its own right. Perhaps there should be a national community police service—similar to the British Transport Police, which has its own chief constable. Such a service could be an integral part of community safety partnerships and national strategies for a better Scotland.

The Convener: That is an interesting point. Perhaps John Wilson can pursue it a little further.

John Wilson: Good morning, gentlemen. Mr Campbell, you gave some examples of what you perceive as good practice. You mentioned street football, discos in the glen and various other activities, and police constables on bicycles in Coatbridge. Would any panel member like to expand on that and give other examples of good practice in community policing?

William Campbell: I will give a couple of examples. One is from a long time ago and the other is recent. In the UK, we used to have the National Neighbourhood Watch Association annual awards. The award for the best policeman in Britain went to PC Ian Marshall, who was a community policeman in Moffat for 20 years. He built up a rapport with the youths. He took them hillwalking and on mountain bike rides around the hills of Moffat. Everybody in the town got to know him, and he knew everybody. He became so good as a community policeman that the youths used to invite him to go along and be the doorman or bouncer at the discos that they organised. It says a lot for him that the local youngsters asked him to do that.

Ian was on duty at Lockerbie when the Pan Am plane was bombed. I believe that he was the first person to give evidence at the trial in The Hague. Later, he was involved with the mass slaughter of animals during the foot-and-mouth outbreak. He told me that one of the most frightening experiences of his life was moving up a farm road towards a farmer who was standing with his gun. The farmer was a close friend, but Ian did not know how he was going to take the situation as he tried to get the slaughtermen in. Ian was able to do that because of his work in the community.

The fact that Ian had 20 years' service gives us an insight. We hear that community policing is now part of a career structure. Young officers do community policing, but then they move on. We know of a community policeman—as it happens, not a policewoman—who has been moved three times in six months. There is no continuity.

I said that I would give you a more up-to-date example. This is not from a rural area. PC Tony Lawrence got the award from the Association of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches this year. His area is in north Edinburgh, which is quite a bad area for crime and consists of mainly poorer housing and bought ex-council stock. He attends neighbourhood watch meetings and talks to residents. Without going too far, he prefers to walk his beat and spends much of his time in the problematic areas, trying to solve the problems. There is no street football and no discos, but he is out there on the ground, doing his best for the community. I will not bore you with the details of the awards—they are on the Association of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches website. There is a list of everybody who got an award, which can be downloaded.

The Convener: Do you want to add to that, Professor Bonney?

Professor Bonney: Sorry, can you remind me of the question?

The Convener: Mr Wilson asked whether you can cite any examples of good practice in community policing.

Professor Bonney: The good practice that I commend to you today is the regular meetings of community councils at which police officers are present. That is an extremely important way for the police to communicate with local communities and vice versa. It is a good model. There is often an emphasis on big, new initiatives and innovations. Why not give more resources and support to community councils to play that important role in improving communications with the police?

John Wilson: Given the diversity of the geographical environments in Scotland, which can have populations of low or high density, how should community policing be carried out in the different communities? The Association of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches has carried out a survey of its members. Have any views come forward from that survey—or from the 1,200 community councils—on how community policing should be

carried out, apart from officers' attending community council meetings once a month?

William Campbell: We received an interesting suggestion from someone who lives in a rural area where there are four small villages or hamlets. Their comment was that the community policeman drives through those villages in his car but never stops. They asked whether it might be possible for a police van to deliver the constable to that area—and, perhaps, another constable to another area—with a bicycle so that he could cycle around the four villages for two hours or so, stopping to talk to people. The person said that, although the area has a community policeman, he has such a wide area to cover that he just drives around and nobody ever gets to talk to him.

There is no community council in my area, which is perhaps a fault. Not every area in Scotland has a community council, but we reckon that there are 3,500 neighbourhood watches with around 25,000 members. That is another area that could be exploited.

Professor Bonney: The community council model works well in rural areas and in urban areas. Some people think that community councils are stronger in rural areas, and I would say that, on balance, they probably are. Nevertheless, it is a great model to be exploited in urban areas where community councils have not been developed.

As William Campbell said, not all of Scotland is covered by community councils, although it is estimated that about 80 per cent of the area of Scotland is covered by them. It would be open to local authorities to promote interest in community councils. Where community councils do not exist, it takes a petition by only 20 electors to get one established under the local authority scheme. It would be helpful if MSPs could encourage the formation of community councils where they do not currently exist, as I am sure that they would help to improve communications between the police and local communities. It would be of great value, not only in relation to police services, but more generally, if more resources were put into community councils.

The Convener: We hear what you are saying, Professor Bonney, but the committee's inquiry is into policing. Perhaps we can return to the main subject. In your community council experience, you will have seen the introduction of a number of community policing initiatives. What initiatives have been most successful in promoting a public perception of increased safety and in cutting crime?

Professor Bonney: I do not think that I can answer that question, I am afraid. I do not claim to have any particular knowledge from which to answer your question.

The Convener: That is very fair. What about Mr Campbell?

William Campbell: In Fife, there are the community teams that go in where there is a big problem with antisocial behaviour. Those include not just the police, although the community police are heavily involved, but the health service, social workers and everybody. They target an area for a month or two months at a time and give the families there the support that they need to come out of that environment—they can actually change things. Those community teams are terrific initiatives that have been run by Fife's housing investigation and safer neighbourhoods teams. Community police are also involved in that work, which really makes a difference. We are waiting to see whether such initiatives will still be making a difference one or two years down the line.

The Convener: Mr Watson, do you have anything to add?

James Carr Watson: I have no further comment to make on that.

Bill Butler: Good morning, gentlemen, and thank you for coming along. In terms of police-community engagement, what mechanisms appear to be most successful and why? For example, Dumfries and Galloway had an annual consultation day. Does community planning offer a way forward? What are the most effective ways of establishing a proper, developed relationship between the police and local communities?

William Campbell: The first one that comes to mind is the community policeman—the old beat copper—who would be known to virtually everybody in his community. The two community police officers who are allocated to my area cover virtually the whole of Methil rather than just one or two streets. There is also a response team that comes up. Those officers will get known, provided that people can talk to them.

At the moment, the local police station is given the dates and times of every neighbourhood watch meeting in an area and the community police officers are asked to attend. They also attend community forums, which all members of the public are able to attend with whatever gripe they may have—usually the police feature pretty highly. Therefore, we can engage the community police officers, and they are responding.

Under the service level agreement that exists between Fife Constabulary and Fife Neighbourhood Watch Association, a community policeman should contact his neighbourhood watch co-ordinator at least once a month to find out what is happening in the area, whether there are any problems and so on. That is a minimum requirement that was signed up to by the ex-chief constable, who I believe retired on Sunday.

Professor Bonney: The question was about models of community engagement.

Bill Butler: Yes.

Professor Bonney: I can offer one or two comments on that. The basic message that I am giving to you today is that you should use community councils. They are autonomous groups of citizens who come together outwith the control of the local authority—which sometimes leads to difficulties—for the wellbeing of their neighbourhoods. Through their communications with the police, they can help to improve community policing, and they are involved with other services as well. The emphasis on partnership comes through at the community council level.

There are other initiatives in community policing that I have observed, perhaps the most significant of which is the neighbourhood partnerships that are developing in Edinburgh. Within that initiative, the police are key partners in bringing together local public services and representatives of local communities. Those partnerships are in their early days and I am concerned that they may be drawing attention away from the community councils, which act at a more intimate community level. Nevertheless, that initiative is worth watching.

11:45

Bill Butler: Mr Campbell mentioned that the service level agreement requires the community policeman to contact his neighbourhood watch co-ordinator once a month and to build up the relationship in that way. Obviously, such an agreement must be acted on and is clearly positive. However, to what extent should a community be able to influence police strategy? Should a community be able to influence operational matters, or would it be more appropriate to do that at another level of co-operation?

William Campbell: On a very local level, the community should have a say in what happens. If the major problem in an area is antisocial behaviour—which is what most people would say—people need to be able to tell their local force, "We need to do something about this." Local people might say that the police do not need to worry so much about the drug dealers—I say that tongue in cheek—if it has been decided locally that tackling antisocial behaviour and loud noise is the main issue, on which the police would obviously need to work closely with the council's environmental health department. People should have some say.

However, at the wider regional level, I do not think that local communities should be able to say what should happen in other communities. For example, I could not say what is needed in Dunfermline or St Andrews. It should be up to local people to say what is required locally.

Bill Butler: At the local level, the community could make a positive impact by working with the police and other agencies.

William Campbell: Yes, I am sure that it could, on the community planning side.

Bill Butler: Do either of the other two gentlemen have any comments?

James Carr Watson: Unfortunately, we find that tenants and others are frightened to raise local issues for fear of reprisals, such as damage to their car or window, so they come to me—I am the baddie, if you like—to put in the tale. We have a few paedophiles in our area, and I think that it is time that we knew, to a certain degree, what is going on. Young families are frightened to let their kids go out, but when we mention anything to the local community cop—fortunately, we now have one, and we are trying to re-establish people's trust—we find the situation very difficult.

In our area, we also have many personal crime issues such as antisocial behaviour and the fighting that happens between families who are next door to each other.

Bill Butler: You mean neighbour disputes.

James Carr Watson: The police should listen to people more—as they are now starting to do—rather than just fob them off with, "We'll be back tomorrow," or, "We'll be back in two weeks' time."

Bill Butler: So it is important that there should be real communication.

James Carr Watson: Yes, there should be more communication.

Bill Butler: I have got that. Does Professor Bonney have anything to add?

Professor Bonney: On whether local communities should have a degree of operational control, I do not really think that that is on. However, the community council movement in general is currently debating the extent to which it wants to take on the considerable obligations that were suggested for it in the current Scottish Government's manifesto. There is quite a debate as to whether we have the capacity or desire to run services, but the issue is certainly being entertained. Clearly, operational control of the police is not in the sphere of competence of local community bodies.

The issue of the democratic accountability of the police is dealt with by allowing elected members of police boards to exercise some degree of influence over operational issues. I get the

impression that the elected members on police boards are not that effective. I cannot give chapter and verse on that, but perusal of minutes suggests that elected members of police boards have an opportunity to play more of a role than they currently play.

Bill Butler: I guess that local authority members would have the opposite opinion, but I am grateful and obliged for that clearly stated opinion.

Margaret Smith: Gentlemen, my question follows on from some of what we have just heard. What challenges do local communities face in trying to engage with community policing initiatives and how might those challenges be addressed?

For example, Mr Watson suggested that more information should be shared with communities. I also wonder whether people within neighbourhood watch organisations and community councils might find it helpful to be given more information and even training on different police roles, so that they understand what resources are available to the police. Would more information and training be helpful to community representatives in trying to engage with community policing initiatives?

William Campbell: That is a good question.

The situation in Fife—I will take Fife as an example as both Jim Carr Watson and I live there—is that we currently have 250 neighbourhood watches, which belong to nine separate local associations. The associations meet their police community safety officers either monthly or two-monthly. That regular two-way communication between the police and the neighbourhood watch associations is then fed down to the members of each of the neighbourhood watch schemes.

A similar strategy is beginning to be adopted in other areas, such as Strathclyde. Two weeks ago, I visited Whiteinch in Glasgow, where people are trying to promote more neighbourhood watches and to form area neighbourhood watch associations so that the police can have better communication with them. This afternoon, Jim Carr Watson and I hope to make it through to Helensburgh to make a similar presentation to neighbourhood watches in that area. We are trying to improve communication between the police and neighbourhood watches by bringing watches together into a geographical association so that the police do not need to go to every neighbourhood watch if they want to pass on a message. We are trying that at the moment. I hope that that gives some indication of what is going on.

Professor Bonney: Generally, community councils tend to make the sorts of statements that we heard previously about the difficulties with community policing, such as the lack of continuity of individual police officers, the difficulty of building a stable relationship because officers change over and the problems caused by officers being drawn away to other duties. Some community councils report little or no contact with the police.

Generally, there is a difficulty in understanding all the other activities in which police forces are involved. People appreciate the need for front-line services, so they welcome the community policing role and they want more of it. However, when people begin to talk about operational issues with police officers, they come to understand the huge range of tasks that the police are called on to confront. The chief constable in particular—as I am sure members are aware—has a problem in deploying forces both to local community responsibilities and to many other tasks. Some appreciation of those problems comes about through communication between community councils and police officers.

On the question of sharing information, in my experience police officers share a lot of information with their local community councils about what crimes have occurred in the neighbourhood in the past month or so and what the trends might be. Obviously, such information sharing helps communities to respond to the challenges that confront them.

I am sure that there is always a case for more improved training generally for community councils. Some local authorities provide training. The Association of Scottish Community Councils provides some limited training and is seeking to provide more. That would pay off not only in relation to police services, but more generally.

Stuart McMillan: What support should be provided to communities to help them articulate their policing needs?

Professor Bonney: The suggestion that I have made on behalf of the Association of Scottish Community Councils has considerable potential to be exploited further, if community councils are provided with more resources. Usually community councils manage on a budget of a few hundred pounds a year. Although they are established by statute, under local government legislation, essentially they are voluntary organisations. If more resources were made available to them to do their general work, which is to represent local communities to public authorities, I am sure that there would be a pay-off in terms of assisting the police to fulfil their responsibilities.

William Campbell: Mr Watson has already indicated that there is fear in many communities that being outspoken can lead to reprisals. In many cases, the police drive right up to the door of the person who made the phone call, although they have said that they do not want to be known.

For that reason, it is difficult to get the public to engage with the police. I know from personal experience that defence lawyers can get the names and addresses of witnesses and are entitled to visit them, which makes people wary of helping the police by providing information. As Jim Carr Watson said, when people come to him as part of neighbourhood watch with information, he becomes the bad guy, because he passes that information on.

The mechanisms that we listed were community councils, community forums, neighbourhood watch, and tenants and residents associations. All those bodies are already actively engaged in talking to the police; the police are also talking to them. The big problem was identified as apathy, but sometimes I think that it is disillusionment. When communication breaks down—for whatever reason—it is difficult to get people to come back. Disillusionment may result from officers being abstracted for a month or being moved on after a short spell in neighbourhood policing. People ask why they should bother, given that the police never turn up or do anything.

We have difficulty getting people to understand the role of call centres—sometimes they think that they are talking to their local police station, but they are not. That is another barrier to communication. Out of necessity, call centres prioritise any information that they get. Although an issue may be important to the local member who is phoning the police, it will not be prioritised if another four major events are happening.

Communication with the local bobby is key. It is important for people to be able to phone their local station, as I can, and, if the bobby is not there, to be able to leave a message on the answering machine, as I can. If the bobby comes out to visit them and they get the feeling that communication and public spirit works, the public will get involved. In that situation, any mechanism that the Parliament puts in place to engage the community in consultation will work, because people will come forward. Until then, they will keep away.

The Convener: I turn briefly to the issue of partnership working, as I know that witnesses have given us a number of useful answers under that heading.

Cathie Craigie: How important is partnership working between the police and other agencies to the effectiveness of community policing? What are the key ingredients of successful partnerships?

12:00

Professor Bonney: I keep returning to the nature of community councils because the point is important. Community councillors are local residents who have gone through a public process of election or nomination. Their concern is the general wellbeing of their local community—their statutory role is to consider that. They are meant to ascertain and co-ordinate the community's views.

As I said, the police service is often responsive to community councils but, historically, not all local authority departments have been. Local authority councillors in many cases and MSPs in some cases help with communication with public agencies but, at the grass roots in small neighbourhoods, community councils' concern is good partnership working between all the agencies. Community councils involve the lowest level at which partnership can work. Partnership working at that level is developing more generally throughout Scotland. It is important to stress that partnership working starts at that grass-roots level.

Cross-agency working is required to tackle the problems that emanate from a neighbourhood. We see that in the west end of Edinburgh, where we have a running problem of shopkeepers displaying their wares on pavements, which obstructs pedestrians' progress. Complaints are often made about that. Dealing with that requires liaison with the police and the local authority.

If local authorities were fully attentive to community councils and worked with the police and other agencies, partnership working could be much more effective at the grass roots, where it is important to tackle problems.

William Campbell: In general, we all agree that partnership working is the key to success in community safety. The services that our members identified as important were those provided by community wardens; care workers, who usually see the elderly or sometimes younger vulnerable members of society; the involvement of local authority housing investigations and safer communities teams, which we mentioned, especially in relation to antisocial behaviour orders; social workers; environmental health officers for noise pollution; the fire service; and the national health service. In the voluntary sector, the important services were neighbourhood watch schemes, community safety panels, crime reduction panels, tenants and residents associations and community councils.

Our members said that all those agencies were important and should work together. They identified those agencies as active in tackling youth disorder through initiatives such as blue-light discos, which I mentioned. Care workers identify vulnerable members of society and bring in agencies such as the Fife cares service in our area, which undertakes house safety checks along with the fire service; advises on security with the police; supplies door-chains, personal attack alarms and such stuff free; and gives training on

what to do if an accident occurs in the home. As I am sure all members know, the number of deaths from accidents in the home in comparison with the number of deaths from crime is surprising.

On intelligence from community police, neighbourhood watches can usually advise vulnerable people about attempts to commit crimes. A big problem in west Fife is bogus callers. A nice motorway network brings them in and out of the area—perhaps that is a bad thing to advertise. Neighbourhood watches support people as part of the community and almost act like victim support services, as they keep with people after events have occurred. Agencies coming together to work in partnership is very important.

Stuart McMillan: I will follow up a question that I asked earlier. Mr Campbell gave two examples of community police officers who had won awards, one of whom had been a community police officer for 20 years. What is the ideal timeframe to serve as a community police officer in an area? You can answer with your opinion or a view from the research that you mentioned, if it covered that issue.

William Campbell: About three years ago, I visited New Zealand. As I was involved in neighbourhood watch schemes, I got in touch with their equivalent there. I finished up at the commissioner's office in Wellington, although I had not been on the North Island, so I had to travel up there. It was interesting to hear what New Zealand's idea of community policing is. The community policeman there is probably in the last 10 years of his career. Scottish police forces seem to think that a policeman in such a position would take life easy, but that system certainly works there. The community policeman runs the community; he is responsible for almost all the policing and brings the community together. That seems to be very effective.

Twenty years ago, Scotland had a similar situation. A police constable who was near the end of his career would be given an area to patrol, such as the town centre or the high street. That was his area and he got to know everything in it. That arrangement seemed to work. I do not think that we can ever return to the beat bobby—such as PC Murdoch from the *Sunday Post*—but people would love to see that.

Our view is that a police officer needs at least six months to get to know his area and his people, and it would be ideal if he had another 18 months to work with them before he was moved on, which would mean two years as a community policeman.

The Convener: Gentlemen, thank you for coming to give evidence. The committee has heard evidence from a mixture of people, the vast majority of whom are—naturally—professional witnesses. It gives me great pleasure to pay tribute to you for the way in which you have given evidence and for what you do in communities. Scotland relies heavily on those who do voluntary work—the unsung heroes. We greatly appreciate that work.

Collectively and individually, committee members take the strongest view that any reprisals against people who have helped the police with inquiries should be acted on vigorously and rigorously by the police and the Crown prosecution authorities. We would not stand by idly and allow such incidents to happen.

Thank you very much for coming.

William Campbell: Thank you for having us.

The Convener: Agenda item 5 is on witness expenses. Does the committee agree to delegate to me the responsibility for arranging to pay witness expenses that arise from the inquiry?

Members *indicated agreement*.

Meeting closed at 12:07.

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