JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 3 June 2008

Session 3

£5.00

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body 2008.

Applications for reproduction should be made in writing to the Licensing Division,
Her Majesty's Stationery Office, St Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BQ
Fax 01603 723000, which is administering the copyright on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.

Produced and published in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body by RR Donnelley.

CONTENTS

Tuesday 3 June 2008

JUSTICE COMMITTEE
14th 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 GAVE EVIDENCE:

Joe Grant (Scottish Police Federation)
Councillor Martin Greig (Grampian Joint Police Board and Scottish Police Authorities Conveners Forum)
Chief Superintendent Matt Hamilton (Association of Scottish Police Superintendents)
David Higgins (Scottish Police Authorities Conveners Forum)
Chief Superintendent Val McHoull (Association of Scottish Police Superintendents)
Councillor Paul Rooney (Strathclyde Joint Police Board and Scottish Police Authorities Conveners Forum)
Chief Constable John Vine (Tayside Police and Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland)
Councillor Iain Whyte (Lothian Joint Police Board and Scottish Police Authorities Conveners Forum)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Douglas Wands

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Anne Peat

ASSISTANT CLERK

Euan Donald

LOCATION

Committee Room 2

Scottish Parliament

Justice Committee

Tuesday 3 June 2008

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:22*]

Community Policing Inquiry

The Convener (Bill Aitken): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I remind everyone to switch off their mobile phones. Agenda item 1 is the third oral evidence-taking session in the committee's community policing inquiry.

I welcome again Councillor Paul Rooney, convener of Strathclyde joint police board and chair of the Scottish police authorities conveners forum; Councillor Martin Greig, convener of Grampian joint police board and member of the Scottish police authorities conveners forum; Councillor Iain Whyte, convener of Lothian joint police board and member of the Scottish police authorities conveners forum; and David Higgins of the Scottish police authorities conveners forum. Gentlemen, thank you for giving us your time this morning. We will move straight to questions.

Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP): Good morning, gentlemen. Your written submission calls for

"one vision and definition of what 'community policing' … means".

What should be included in such a definition?

The Convener: During the session, it would be helpful if someone could give a lead opinion from the conveners. Thereafter, if anyone feels that they need to augment that, they should do so. However, we are fairly tight for time.

Councillor Paul Rooney (Strathclyde Joint Police Board and Scottish Police Authorities Conveners Forum): Thank you for your warm welcome, convener.

The starting point is that the Scottish police authorities conveners forum is clear that spending time trying to define community policing will not enable us to move forward and deliver what communities want. Communities are clear about what they want—we will explore that in due course. We must ensure that we incorporate within the definition of community policing the visibility that communities want. We have had successes throughout Scotland where we have employed visible policing and we have seen the results—reductions in crime and, perhaps more important, in the perception of crime.

Councillor Iain Whyte (Lothian Joint Police Board and Scottish Police Authorities Conveners Forum): Although we have called for a clear definition, we would not want it to be restrictive. It should be broad based and should highlight some issues, such as defining the neighbourhoods in which we want community policing to work and considering performance standards. Community policing can mean different things in different areas. In some parts of Edinburgh, it is about the community beat officer and their interaction with community councils and so on. In others, it might be about the policing team and how it works throughout an area. In Lothian and Borders as a whole, there might be a difference between community policing in the city of Edinburgh and community policing in some of our rural communities in the Borders.

The Convener: We have already gathered that from other evidence sessions. Councillor Greig, do you have anything to add?

Councillor Martin Greig (Grampian Joint Police Board and Scottish Police Authorities Conveners Forum): It would be valuable to go back to Sir Robert Peel's early definition because it is difficult to define a community police officer. The British tradition of policing puts great emphasis on a locally identified member of the public who is a police officer. The public also have an important role in policing their areas. The definition of community policing needs to emphasise the prevention of crime and disorder rather than tackling the problems. The famous

"test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder"

as opposed to

"the visible evidence of police action in dealing with it."

The committee has a real task on its hands to define community policing.

The Convener: We will be up to it.

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): Good morning, gentlemen. What priority do the police give to community policing in Scotland? Does it vary between force areas?

Councillor Rooney: Yes, it varies. Each force determines its level of community policing. In Strathclyde, we have 600 to 700 officers who are dedicated to community policing, so we already have a significant commitment to community policing. We have those resources in communities because we believe that it improves engagement with what we are trying to do in agency and partnership working—as you are aware, it is important that the police are represented. We also want more delivery, in terms of ensuring that every officer assigned to a community is well aware of the prevalent issues.

The Convener: We are having an evidence session with Chief Constable House in a couple of weeks.

Bill Butler: Councillor Greig, do you wish to add anything, either from yourself or from Sir Robert Peel?

Councillor Greig: Grampian Police has tried to allocate individual constables, sergeants and inspectors to specific areas. That is obviously a resource-intensive exercise and there are many examples of abstraction from the local areas. I hear complaints from constituents and others that local officers are being abstracted, for example to royal Deeside to provide protection or to specific campaigns. A lot of effort is being put into the community policing function, certainly in my force area, but it requires significant resources and we have major problems with that. We are one of the below-average funded forces and we have additional unmet financial pressures, such as policing the oil and gas industry and royalty protection. There is also the upcoming problem of the pensions shortfall, which will put additional pressures on Grampian Police, as it will on all forces.

Bill Butler: All forces have to grapple with the challenge of finite resources, but we hear what you are saying—I am sure that the Government hears it, too.

Do you have a figure, as Councillor Rooney did, for the number of officers allocated to community policing in Grampian?

10:30

Councillor Greig: There are 37 neighbourhoods in the Aberdeen City Council area, and Grampian Police has attempted to allocate an officer to each. The city is also divided into six areas, with an inspector in each one. I am not exactly sure of the pattern in the other two local authority areas, but that is the general format.

Bill Butler: I am grateful for that. What is the situation in Lothian, Councillor Whyte?

Councillor Whyte: It is similar to the situation in Grampian. We have a community beat officer in each area. The areas were modelled on the old single-member council wards. The new multimember wards have three or four officers, each in a beat area, depending on the size of the ward. A sector inspector is in charge of each team.

What I have to say about abstractions is slightly more positive than what Councillor Greig had to say. In the past year, under our new chief constable, there has been a move to try to keep officers working in communities. That certainly seems to be working, because I am not hearing the sort of complaints that I heard previously about officers constantly leaving to undertake other duties.

A few years ago, when the force centralised policing in A division, which covers the city of Edinburgh, we ended up with response teams for the whole city. We found that that made it difficult to achieve continuity. For example, one team might have dealt with one incident and another team, which had no knowledge of the first incident, might have been sent to deal with a follow-up incident a few hours later. Teams are now split into geographical areas in the city. They are not community teams as such, but they are more accountable to a specific area than they were previously.

Bill Butler: So, you think that it is important to have a direct link and to maintain continuity.

Councillor Whyte: Absolutely. The sectors are brought together into larger sectors and there is a superintendent in charge of each one. A chief inspector and a superintendent look at each area to ensure that feedback is given to local elected members, communities and our new neighbourhood partnerships.

Bill Butler: Mr Higgins, do you have anything to add to that?

David Higgins (Scottish Police Authorities Conveners Forum): Not at this time.

Bill Butler: We have heard that there is perhaps a problem here and there with abstraction, although the councillors have differing views on that—we heard the views of Councillor Greig and Councillor Whyte. In your experience, how does the delivery of community policing vary throughout Scotland in terms of available resources, priorities of community officers, levels of engagement with communities and abstractions?

Councillor Whyte: It is difficult for me to talk about things that are happening in other parts of Scotland.

Bill Butler: What are the good things in Lothian and what are the things that could be improved upon?

Councillor Whyte: I can think of a number of good things. The police are firmly built into the neighbourhood partnership arrangements that are in place in each council, although those arrangements are called slightly different things in different areas. The local inspector goes along to the partnership meetings, or ensures that he sends someone along on his behalf.

I put a motion to the board to ask the chief constable to produce neighbourhood performance statistics. All my colleagues agreed the motion, and those statistics will be given to the

partnerships in future. That will soon be rolled out across the force area, so that community councillors and elected members have a direct link into the information about their area and can review it and work on the issues that emerge.

Another important step, which is relatively new and might not easily be seen as community policing, is that although we have all moved to central call centres that handle everything that comes into the force, we now have operational support units where a lot of the grade 4 calls—the lowest priority calls—go. The response is sometimes only over the phone, but it gets the job done and it gets information to the public on those incidents. The public get a response that they perhaps previously did not get because of the demands on response teams. That is another of the new chief constable's initiatives, which has cost some money but has improved the public's perception that the police are responsive to them.

Councillor Greig: Grampian Police force is closely integrated into the work of the community planning partnerships and it is a key player in them. The force has an important role in setting the agenda and in actioning tasks set by the partnerships. Local police officers attend all the community council meetings in their area whenever that is possible. There are five community councils in my ward and there is a police officer at every community council meeting. That is an important way to have an effective dialogue between residents and the local community policing force.

In addition, Grampian joint police board is working, through its performance sub-group, on devising a set of performance monitoring figures to try and identify and measure service response and community reassurance through policing. That is to try and use ideas from the Scottish policing performance framework locally and to set our own Grampian Police priorities to define the targets and goals that we want measured. We want to have baseline figures and to find out specifically what the police are doing within areas.

Bill Butler: Is that not a bit of a challenge? You are aiming for qualitative rather than quantitative criteria.

Councillor Greig: As ever, you must be careful when you handle performance statistics because you will only ever get quantitative results. That is why it is so important to have the correct context for statistics gathering. We are trying to be focused about determining what priorities we want measured and what exactly it is that we want to know that the police are doing, perhaps at divisional level and at more local level. Thanks to information technology, it is possible to obtain detailed figures. A vast amount of information is available from the improvement through knowledge and performance system—IKAP—and through information technology that has been developed. The information is there; we just need to interrogate the system to get the information that we want and that will support conclusions.

Councillor Rooney: There has been a vast improvement in community engagement in Strathclyde through dedicating resources. One of the failings is that too few officers are dedicated to local areas. We currently tend to have one officer per former council ward, which may equate to three or four officers in an area. As you indicated, the main failing is abstractions. As you can imagine, various football matches and parades are held in the Strathclyde region and community officers were always the first port of call for policing such events.

I want briefly to move on, for the committee's benefit, to discuss what we propose to do in Strathclyde. We are obviously benefiting from the additional police resources promised by the Scottish Government and from our partnership working with local councils and our efficiency savings, which should allow us to have at least 500 or 600 additional officers over the next three years. All those officers will be dedicated to community policing. That indicates how the Strathclyde joint police board and Strathclyde Police feel about community policing: we believe that it is the priority. Any new resource will not be to the detriment of response policing, which is also very important. However, the better Blantyre initiative, for example, shows the difference that dedicated local resources can make to a community—they can turn the community around.

Implementing such initiatives is important, but we also need long-standing commitments to effect change. Under the policing model on which the board and chief constable are currently working, we are looking at deploying new community officers in a neighbourhood-style policing model, whereby each community planning area will on average have 50 dedicated officers. An important point is that those officers will not be abstracted from their communities for football matches or parades but will be permanent in those communities. Moreover, they will not be moved from those duties but will be assigned to those communities for at least one year, if not two.

Bill Butler: Has the chief constable taken that operational decision about the non-abstraction of certain officers?

Councillor Rooney: Yes. In the joint board's discussions, we have passed on clearly the feelings of communities. I am sure that all committee members have attended public meetings at which they have heard the frustrations that communities experience when police officers—whether superintendents or local

community officers—change. We are trying to promote better engagement and relationships with the police so that the police can start tackling the issues that all our communities face. As I mentioned, as a joint board we believe in visible policing and in providing additional resources in our communities over and above the response policing resources that already exist. That is the way forward.

Bill Butler: I have one final question. The committee hears what Councillor Rooney has said about the additional 500 to 600 police officers that Strathclyde Police believes it will have over the next three-year period. Obviously, we wish that to happen. However, was Councillor Rooney a wee bit dismayed at recent reports that Strathclyde Police had 200 fewer officers over the past year?

Councillor Rooney: I emphasise that we should have a sizeable increase in police numbers in Strathclyde this year. That recent report gave only a snapshot—and an interpretation of that snapshot. As the committee will be aware, we are suffering from the Edmund-Davies effect so a decision was taken early on to inflate or establish our numbers so that we could compensate for that loss of experienced officers. I ask the committee not to place too much emphasis on this year's figures but to consider the number of officers that we are bringing through. This year alone, Strathclyde Police will put in excess of 800 officers through the Scottish Police College. In addition to the 500-plus additional community police officers to which I referred, that takes us to 1,200 new officers. That is a sizeable number in policing terms. Indeed, the committee might wish to note that that exceeds the total of some forces in Scotland.

Bill Butler: We all hope that Councillor Rooney's confidence is well founded.

Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab): I have a question on abstractions. Can Councillor Rooney give a cast-iron guarantee that no community officer will be abstracted from duties? Such a commitment was given by the previous chief constable, who also said that abstractions would in principle work in favour of the community police officers. However, the Faslane 365 campaign resulted in quite significant abstractions in the interests of public safety.

Councillor Rooney: Mr Martin is quite right that that is what has always been said. As a local councillor, I was told on many occasions that our community officers would be secured and would not be taken away. The difference now is that that is policy. I cannot give a cast-iron commitment that community officers will not be abstracted because that is an operational matter. When circumstances such as the terrorist incident at Glasgow airport occur, we cannot give an assurance that community officers will not be used to deal with those. However, the chief constable of Strathclyde Police, Mr House, has given a commitment that community officers will not be assigned duties to deal with regular events such as football matches, parades or even a Faslane 365 protest. The chief constable cannot be expected to give a cast-iron guarantee that officers will not be abstracted in any circumstances, but he has said that they will not be abstracted for regular events, which is when communities have suffered. For most of the year, some 50,000 or 60,000 people attend football matches every weekend in Glasgow; one can imagine how many officers are required to police such events.

10:45

Paul Martin: Which officers will be abstracted? Will it be those who are monitoring sex offenders or dealing with other specialist duties? Somebody has to be abstracted, so who will it be?

Councillor Rooney: You are absolutely right to ask that question, but it is a more appropriate question for Mr House, because that is an operational matter. The joint board does not have any ability to direct the chief constable, although obviously we try to use our influence to ensure that we get the best delivery of policing services for all our communities.

A significant majority of the 7,500 Strathclyde officers are not community police officers. In the past, community police officers were identified as the flexible unit within Strathclyde that could be used to attend regular events such as football matches. The commitment from Mr House is that that will no longer be the case. As I said, I do not wish to reflect on the past, because neither Mr House nor I were present then, but we are giving a commitment—indeed, it will be a policy document, which it was not before.

The Convener: I remind members that the committee will have the opportunity to question Mr House on 24 June.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): I have a question on that issue. Councillor Rooney, you said in response to a question from one of my colleagues that community police officers from within the Strathclyde force area would be dedicated to that job for perhaps a year or two years. The committee took evidence last week from community council representatives and neighbourhood watch scheme representatives who called for a longer period of continuity than that. I know from the area that I represent, Cumbernauld and Kilsyth, that that is one of the points that communities raise. Do you think that one or two years gives the community sufficient time to get to know the officer, and vice versa, at the grass-roots level?

Councillor Rooney: I would like a one or two-year commitment. There is currently none; community officers can be in place for as little as three months and no relationship is established. If we have a guarantee of at least one to two years, we can start to cement relationships, whereas at the moment there is no such commitment for local policing. We have been very successful as community partners in ensuring that the police are setting out the tables at a strategic and tactical level. We now need to have the police doing that at the delivery level.

If we have community teams of a sizeable number—more than one or two officers—officers can start to deliver. It has been very difficult for the police, who merely respond to events, to try to tackle issues that impinge on people's quality of life, such as antisocial behaviour and underage drinking, which the committee and the Parliament are quite rightly considering. If there is a one or two-year commitment from each officer in those community teams, they will know where the issues and the problems lie. Although that is not ideal, it would be a sufficient commitment to the community given that there is no commitment in place at the moment.

Cathie Craigie: Do you accept—perhaps the other witnesses will nod their heads—that a one or two-year commitment is not what the general public expect from Scotland's police forces? They say that they want community police officers to be rooted within the community. Those are the people that you and I seek to represent, and they say that there should be a longer commitment.

Councillor Rooney: I am trying to be realistic. I am conscious of the fact that there is currently no commitment and that officers, far from being given permanent postings, are abstracted on a daily basis. By having a subdivisional model, the officers will probably not, in reality, be removed from a particular community. We are trying to dedicate resources to specific communities and streets where there are problems.

I understand and share community concerns that officers should be in place for as long as possible, but at the moment there is no commitment. If we get a commitment to at least one or two years, if not more—and I believe Mr House will say that he is committed, like me, to ensuring that officers are in place and can build relationships—there will be a traditional bobby-on-the-beat mentality, which will be a sufficient reassurance. However, I should add that that is the role of the Strathclyde joint police board and the other police authorities around the country. We must ensure that the community's views and wishes are heard and engaged with.

Cathie Craigie: That was the point that I wanted to make.

Councillor Rooney: We will continue to monitor the situation.

John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): You have already mentioned some forces' community policing measures. Are you aware of any other examples of good practice in your board areas, Scotland-wide or elsewhere?

Councillor Greig: I can provide some more detail about Grampian Police's role in Aberdeen's community planning system. The city's CPP is developing neighbourhood networks, which are modelled on police tasking and co-ordination groups and involve the council, professionals and police officers in working relationships in small, geographically identified areas. Everyone gets round the table to identify local interests and work together to find solutions to very basic grass-roots problems that concern residents such as cleanliness, safety and roads. The networks are not all in place, but those that have been established are very proactive.

Grampian Police has also spearheaded a total community project that has been very successfully trialled in the Torry area of Aberdeen. In the project, which has been something of a flagship network in the city and the Grampian Police area, health professionals, council officials and the police have been working together as an integrated team. This new way of working, which fully involves the police and ensures that they, along with council officials, are part not only of the visible official presence on the streets but of a shared team, is certainly an important means of pushing forward with the community planning agenda and is due to be rolled out in other areas.

Councillor Whyte: Although it takes a slightly different approach, Edinburgh's city centre policing unit—of which members such as Margaret Smith who know the city will be aware—is a similar example. The City of Edinburgh Council has paid for additional officers to patrol both the city centre and other areas of the city. However, the officers in the city centre form a dedicated resource that has been added to the force's existing resource in the area. The chief constable has assured us that they will not be abstracted unless there is an absolute emergency, and we have a partnership agreement enforcing that policy.

For a year now, those policemen have been working as a team with various council officers in the city centre and have had a significant impact, with a 24 per cent reduction in recorded crime and a good clear-up rate. Given that high volumes of people congregate day and night in the city centre and that, as a result, there are high volumes of crime, making an impact on that ensures that we make an impact on safety in the whole city.

However, we need to take different approaches to these issues. Obviously, we cannot put the same resources into every suburb, but the board is certainly keen to encourage such partnership working in different areas to ensure that there is proper tasking and command work, that officers either at community beat level or in response teams are a visible presence in areas where there are problems and that they try to solve those problems. It is about targeting the available resources at the right places to solve problems. I see that and interacting with the public through community councils and other forums as the key to community policing.

Councillor Rooney: The on-going example of the city centre plan in Glasgow and the various town plans throughout Strathclyde demonstrate that, by sourcing additional funding from local councils, community planning funding and so on, a visible presence can be put on the streets, specifically on Friday and Saturday nights, when problems are most prevalent.

I have already mentioned local examples such as the better Blantyre initiative. In Shettleston in the east of Glasgow, the provision of community planning money from the council has allowed us to put in place community teams on the model that I described. With such a model, there are dedicated resources in particular areas and communities and the approach has been effective in Blantyre. Blantyre was decimated by antisocial behaviour and more serious events. When we surveyed members of the public there, we found that the number 1 issues were antisocial behaviour and community safety, as they are in most communities in Strathclyde, but they stopped being the number 1 issues partly as a result of the better Blantyre policing model. I am not saying that that will be long lasting, but it demonstrates how quickly people's perceptions of their communities can be turned round.

That is why Strathclyde joint police board is convinced that we will make an impact by putting additional dedicated resources into our communities. I do not want to return to the point that I made about the length of time that officers are in communities, but of course the longer they are bedded into communities, the more the community will recognise them as being part of it. That has been lacking in the past, to be honest. Indeed, photographs of community police officers, councillors and MSPs can be put on websites or in community halls. That would be a tremendous step forward. Such an approach has been taken in Blantyre, where it has been very effective.

The Convener: I do not think that we should go that far.

Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): I would like to pick up on some things that Councillor Whyte said, including his comments on abstractions. There have certainly been improvements in Edinburgh, but will you clarify the funding arrangements that have been put in place in Lothian and the Borders? Obviously, there has been direct funding from the council, so guarantees in the partnership working have followed. We know that people frequently want to work together, but the difficulties of doing so often result from the issue of funding. Will you give us a little more information about the funding arrangements?

Councillor Whyte: I think that the council paid for 36 dedicated officers in the city centre team. The chief constable agreed to match that number in order to have a 24-hour team available. That has ensured a constant officer presence in the city centre, which is weighted to the times in which it is most needed. Obviously, extra officers will be on the streets on Friday and Saturday evenings, for example, when the night-time economy is in full swing.

What has been said about abstractions is key. The policy is that the teams remain in place in the area that they police short of absolute emergencies or major incidents. They get to know the area—that is what they have been doing. They have worked closely with businesses, council officers and the licensing people in particular to ensure that licensed premises whose records are not so good are looked at and policed effectively so that things improve.

11:00

John Wilson: The examples of community policing that the three councillors have cited have been mainly to do with urban areas. The boards that the panel members represent include rural areas, so could they give us an indication of how they view community policing taking place in more rural areas, rather than in high-crime urban areas?

Councillor Rooney: It is fair to say that we have concentrated on urban areas. My opening statement was an attempt to define community planning. Every community in Scotland is unique and diverse, but the Strathclyde joint police board area, which includes 12 councils, is particularly so. There cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach, even within one police force area. We take cognisance of that when we consider rural policing.

In Strathclyde, the rural areas are one step ahead of the urban areas in relation to community policing, which has adapted to the particular needs of those areas. We have a bigger uptake in special constable posts in rural areas, which is how many of the communities in Strathclyde are policed. The resources that are already in place will enable us to make a proper commitment. We are certainly

not concentrating the resources only on urban areas.

Councillor Greig: Obviously, the police are allocated finite resources, which have to be used in places where there are the greatest problems with crime and disorder. That is why we have concentrated, to quite a large extent, on the urban areas. I know that individual towns and villages have allocated community officers. For example, the small village of Braemar has a named local police officer, who is well known to the community and works along with the mountain rescue teams. Even in that area, which has some of the lowest levels of crime and disorder in the United Kingdom, it is still important for a small village to have an identified police officer. That is what is happening in rural areas.

Councillor Whyte: There is a similar situation in Lothian and Borders, where the approach involves community beat officers in each neighbourhood, whether that be urban or rural, and partnership working with local people, the councils and other services. For instance, in some of our smaller towns and villages that do not have a police station, police officers are able to use a council office, or the office of another organisation, if they need to stop off somewhere to write up notes or take a break. That enables them to remain within the community. Further, by co-locating with other services, they are able to learn from those services and can work together with other people to tackle problems.

The Convener: Stuart McMillan was going to ask you a question about stability and continuity, but you have anticipated that to some extent. However, as I cut him off earlier, I will allow him to raise another issue.

Stuart McMillan: Councillor Rooney said that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach. That comes across in paragraph 12.1 in the forum's submission. However, paragraph 3.1.2 says:

> "It is essential that police, partners and communities share one vision and definition of what community policing actually means to the public."

I am a wee bit confused. If there is not a one-size-fits-all approach, how can there be one vision and definition?

The Convener: Mr Higgins, were you the author of that submission?

Mr Higgins: Unfortunately, yes.

The Convener: Then it is only appropriate that you should answer for it.

Mr Higgins: That point raises the difficulty of the situation. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Earlier, I did not enter the discussion when I was invited to because I thought that the three conveners had pointed out quite clearly that we have a model that is about visible policing in the community.

It is about trying to strike a balance. If I used the word "definition" in the submission, I stand corrected because it is perhaps not the best word to use. However, we must have a vision that encompasses the flexibility to provide the required visible policing and balance, and the recognition that there must be a framework for problem solving with communities on the provision of resources, getting results and getting feedback. All those elements would be in the vision, which is the difficulty in trying to tie it down.

Again, I apologise to the committee for using the word "definition". I would prefer to concentrate on the overall vision and on how we can provide suitable, effective, visible policing for all communities. A number of examples of that have been given. Although we have concentrated on urban policing, examples have been given of the visibility of policing in rural communities, which is also essential.

Councillor Whyte: I will add something to that. The key point is that the overall vision must be defined for each community. The definition in each community must be shared by the police, the community and the elected members in the area so that they all understand exactly what they are signing up to. That takes me back to what I understand the committee heard from community councillors and those representing smaller community organisations, who often say to me that they do not know, or are unclear about, what policing there is in their community. That must be defined in future to ensure that they are clearer about what they are getting and what their interaction with the police service is.

The Convener: That is an important point, and you have explained it quite well. We will now pass on to community engagement. Again, you have anticipated some of the questions that we might wish to ask on that, but Paul Martin will open.

Paul Martin: I refer the panel to the Chicago experience, on which we received evidence a couple of weeks ago. We heard that the police took the lead in engaging with the local community. Have any of the panel members taken that kind of approach in their local communities?

Councillor Whyte: Before I became convener, Lothian and Borders Police was already doing what you describe through community beat officers engaging regularly with community councils. They do not go to every meeting, but they attend regularly. With the advent of neighbourhood partnerships in each area, the local inspector and some of his policing team usually attend neighbourhood partnership

meetings and engage in that way. In addition, community councils feed up into our neighbourhood partnerships by electing the community representatives.

Paul Martin: I understand those examples of engagement, but I have never heard of the innovation in the Chicago experience happening in Scotland. The panel members can correct me if I am wrong, but I have never heard of a local police authority organising and leading the public meetings, and engaging with the public and other partners. In my years as an elected representative in Strathclyde, I cannot recall such an approach, but somebody from another authority might be able to give examples.

Councillor Whyte: I am not aware of that approach directly, but I can see the merits in it. When the partnership teams are brought together, the police often take the lead in getting action on things. In my experience, they seem to have much quicker ways of doing things than some of the council services do, for example. They will push others into action by challenging them effectively within a co-operative mechanism. Therefore, I can see a lot of merit in the approach that Paul Martin described. However, the trouble in Scotland is that we have just invented something called community planning, which we have localised in many neighbourhoods. It is still embryonic, so we must give it a chance to work. However, the way to do it might be to have police-led sessions in each neighbourhood partnership meeting in which the police report back to the public, listen to concerns that are raised and interact with others to get things done.

Councillor Rooney: I will take the opportunity to advise MSPs of some proposals that the Strathclyde joint police board is seeking to implement. We believe that the police authority should take the lead in community events, as happens in the Chicago model. At the moment, in addition to local elected members, who are part of their communities, we have dedicated police board members for each area in Strathclyde. That is the case throughout Scotland. Through the community planning model, we would like police board members to be able to sit alongside police officers on community planning boards and to influence the debate on policing matters. In Strathclyde, we have representation at strategic level—I serve on the strategic board of community planning—although that is not the case everywhere. However, at the tactical and delivery level, only the police are represented. I believe that, by serving on community planning boards, police authority members could play a role in influencing the debate on behalf of communities. Such a proposal is being developed.

That relates to Mr McMillan's point of clarification. Each community should determine what policing resources are necessary; the one-size-fits-all approach does not work. It is not possible to apply a framework across a whole area, whether it is a nation or a police force. We must listen to the community, which means engaging with it. I believe that police board members should become part of the community and, through engagement, should start to represent its views. That will supplement the role that community council representatives and elected members play on community planning boards.

In addition, the joint police board is looking to implement a proposal to hold yearly or twice-yearly meetings in the community, whereby the board would call a meeting to talk through specific policing issues, which would be attended by the police along with all the elected members and community representatives.

Paul Martin: Let me be realistic. Some communities have no constitutional arrangements through which they are represented. For example, they might not have a forum such as a community council or a tenants association. How do people in those communities influence how the local police force's resources are used? Would it not be better to set up a framework that would allow those people to influence that process?

Councillor Rooney: Mr Martin is right that in some communities there is a dearth of community councils. Indeed, the area that I represent does not have an active community council, but that is where community planning comes in, because there is a community planning board.

The committee should be made aware of the fact that some areas have no community representation. Community councillors do a tremendous job, but if they are not in place, who represents the views of the community? I am saying that in addition to having elected members on community planning boards, police board members could play a role on those boards, because they probably have the closest understanding of the community's feelings on policing issues.

Paul Martin: Can I look forward to seeing announcements on notice boards about meetings that will be led by local community police officers? You seem to be saying that we are going in a direction whereby communities that do not have adequate representation can look forward to question-and-answer sessions that are led by the local police force and which do not have to be instigated by local elected representatives.

Councillor Rooney: You are absolutely right—that is the proposal in Strathclyde. I believe that

we have a meeting coming up, at which we can discuss that in private. I should add that that is a divisional level proposal; at this stage, it will not be possible to implement it in individual community planning areas. At divisional level, there should be an opportunity for meetings to be called by the police authority, at which divisional commanders can be held to account by the community, by which I mean police board members, elected members, community representatives and members of the public. Although that is only a proposal, I am extremely confident, from my discussions with them, that other members of the community are highly supportive of it.

John Wilson: Paul Martin has asked an important question, and I am grateful for Councillor Rooney's explanation of how Strathclyde envisages dealing with some of the issues that arise as a result of what some people might consider to be a democratic deficit as regards the accountability of the police force. I want to examine that issue further. You say that police board members may sit on local area partnerships to engage in the debate and discussion at that level. Correct me if I am wrong, but the number of police board members from local areas in Strathclyde, for example, does not equate to the number of wards or area partnerships in the region. Therefore, if board members sit on the local partnerships, could that not be seen as an imposition, particularly given that the partnerships may have a different agenda or outlook on community policing in their areas? I suggest that the same applies equally to Grampian, Lothian and Borders and other forces throughout Scotland.

11:15

Councillor Rooney: I can speak only for Strathclyde on the issue and not on behalf of my colleagues. The member is absolutely right. In Glasgow, there are eight police board members and 10 community planning local boards. That is an issue—those police board members might not be able to sit on the groups at the delivery level. However, that is not the case elsewhere in Strathclyde, where police board membership has a more localised dimension. At the tactical level, which is the level that we sometimes forget in community planning, there is scope for police board members to participate and to influence how we engage with the public on policing and other issues in which the police are involved.

Councillor Greig: Community engagement is a challenge for every elected member. It is particularly challenging for the six joint police boards, whose membership comprises appointments from a variety of local authorities. In the Grampian Police area, a positive model has been developed in the local authorities through community planning partnerships. The Aberdeen city alliance, which has been a helpful model and an example of joint working, has enabled local areas to express their concerns and views and have them recorded in a neighbourhood community action plan. All members of the community planning partnership have ownership of that plan. Obviously, the police have a strategic as well as a tactical role in carrying out the plan and addressing the issues that are raised.

It is important that we develop a variety of tools in fighting crime and disorder. Local authorities have a growing role in dealing with antisocial behaviour and enforcing the law as law enforcement agencies. Through the city alliance, Aberdeen City Council is introducing a new city warden team, which will be a form of community policing. The wardens will enforce road safety, parking rules, the dog fouling legislation and litter and graffiti rules and will work closely with Grampian Police. Working together as professionals with a shared community agenda is a positive way in which to proceed. The Chicago model works well there, but we have our own local models, of which we should be proud.

The Convener: We have questions on partnership working, although the witnesses have largely anticipated what we were going to ask. I ask Nigel Don whether there are any other points that he wishes to cover.

Nigel Don (North East Scotland) (SNP): I will work through the issues to ensure that I heard folk right. If not, I might pick up on issues at the edges.

In your written and oral evidence, you seem to be telling us that, in providing local services—not just police services but many local authority services and, in some cases, health services—we should work, as far as possible, with suitably defined geographical areas. As has rightly been said, the community has to understand what the area is, what the points of contact and entry are, and what people within the partnership hope to achieve. We understand that what applies in the centre of Aberdeen or Glasgow will not necessarily apply in Strathdon or Braemar, so let us not worry about the details on the edges of geographical areas, which will clearly be different. Is the community planning area—and such areas have already been implemented—the right size of area, or is it too big or too small?

Councillor Whyte: We still need to build up more experience. In Edinburgh, we have moved from bigger areas that were based on parliamentary constituencies to areas that are mostly based on the new council wards. Some of the new areas are amalgamations of two council wards, but colleagues tell me that they are sometimes a little big.

I believe that we can work in partnership in the areas, and that getting all the officers of all the different organisations to work together is a good way of making services accountable to the public and of getting neighbourhood management right. However, I have a concern that follows on from points that my colleagues here have made. I am wary about the way in which policy might be led. Democratic accountability for the overall policy must remain, so elected members must remain very much part of the process. Those members are elected by the whole community, so they must lead in some of the process, especially when it comes back to police boards or councils.

When we create partnerships and invite members of the public along, those people can be quite representative. However, sometimes they are not, and sometimes the partnerships can end up working for the people who shout the loudest. It is up to elected members to monitor the working of the partnerships and to ensure that they work for everyone's benefit in the community.

Councillor Greig: Every area is different, and each city centre has its own specific policing programme. In Aberdeen, operation oak has been in place since August 2006.

We need to take the identity of any particular geographical area into account and work to the strengths within it. In Aberdeenshire, area committees are considered appropriate for community planning; in Aberdeen, 37 or so neighbourhoods have been carefully identified following consultation with residents on the natural boundaries. We should work within natural geographical areas. Obviously, areas such as city centres will be shared by everybody.

The Convener: Cathie Craigie and Margaret Smith both have small points to raise. Perhaps they could ask Councillor Rooney their questions simultaneously—or, rather, one after the other. [*Laughter.*] Yes, the prospect of those two in a duologue is not a happy one.

Cathie Craigie: I would like to ask each of the witnesses about the percentage of the police force in their areas that is made up of community police officers? In particular, what percentage of the force in Strathclyde is made up of community police officers who will not be abstracted to other duties?

Margaret Smith: And now for something completely different. I wanted to ask about the practical difficulties of joint working. I am a Lothian and Borders person, so I read with some interest the submission from Lothian and Borders Police on community policing. One thing that seems to be working quite well is the sharing of information. In joint working in the past, sharing information has been difficult. The submission talks about the lack of a secure network when computers are speaking to each other, and about practical organisational difficulties that have arisen. Will you give us examples of the practical difficulties in developing joint working with council colleagues and others?

Councillor Rooney: I was trying to do the mental arithmetic, but I have given up, so I will just say that the rough figure at the moment is that 10 per cent of the overall establishment are community officers. They are not ring fenced currently, if I can use that term, but we propose that around 13, 14 or 15 per cent of community officers should be protected from abstractions, which is a significant point.

As for practical difficulties, it is realistic and honest to say that some of the computer systems that Strathclyde Police uses do not speak to one another, let alone to other agency partners. However, there are ways of getting round that. We are seeing a real culture change in the police whereby they will allow agency partners to access information and share proper intelligence, which they would not have done in the past. Steps are being taken. Although the technology is not there as yet, human beings are working in partnership and sharing information, which is having a huge impact.

The Convener: Gentlemen, as is inevitably the case when politicians speak to politicians, this session has run over time considerably. That is not to say that it has not been an extremely valuable session. I thank you very much for attending, particularly Councillor Greig, who has come from a far distance.

11:26

Meeting suspended.

11:28

On resuming—

The Convener: We reconvene to take evidence from Joe Grant, general secretary of the Scottish Police Federation. As he requires no introduction, we will proceed to questioning from Bill Butler.

Bill Butler: Good morning, Mr Grant. In your written submission, you choose to emphasise "visible street policing" rather than "community policing". Will you elaborate on that? Do you think that community policing, as a distinctive specialism, no longer has a place in Scottish policing or are you trying to say something else?

Joe Grant (Scottish Police Federation): We are trying to say something entirely different from that. We have seen evidence to the committee that suggests that some people have sought to achieve almost a silo of community policing by

keeping it untouched as a specialism that does only specific tasks. We see a far broader role for it than just policing communities. That links to one of the first questions that is put to most evidence providers about defined community policing. You have our submission, so I do not intend to repeat what is in it, but you will perhaps remember that the subject exercised me considerably the last time I was here—I said that it was easy on the tongue, but difficult on the head. I hope that what I say today will be a bit more informative.

We think community policing should comprise a focus on establishing community priorities and on crime and antisocial behaviour. That has to be integrated with other policing responses. In other words, it cannot be separated entirely from response policing or specialist policing services, but must be focused on engaging all members of the community and local authority and other service providers, and on getting problems solved in the most appropriate way, by the most appropriate agency. It must involve reporting and publicising results in meaningful statistical information that relates to neighbourhoods and communities, and it must have high policing priority. In our view, some attention must be paid to abstraction. We were attempting not to redefine or to avoid the term "community policing", but to give the concept greater breadth.

11:30

Bill Butler: Would you be more comfortable with the term that you use in your submission, which is "24/7 response policing"? Does that term encapsulate—for you—response policing, reactive policing, intelligent policing and community policing? Would such an integrated approach fit more easily under the heading of "24/7 response policing"?

Joe Grant: It would, but it must be remembered that we used the term in the context of establishing a baseline that would allow the committee to make a judgment later on whether additional resources have been delivered to communities. For me, the issue is one of context rather than ideology.

Bill Butler: You have provided a formula for establishing a baseline figure—the committee is grateful for that.

In 2004, Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary for Scotland published its report "Local Connections—Policing with the Community", which highlighted confusion and ambiguity about the term "community policing" across Scotland. There were varying styles, approaches, labels and designations of community officers. The report stated:

"While local creativity and responsiveness are desirable, HMIC considers that there is a need for more consistent force and national strategies in this area."

To what extent do you agree with that assessment? Is it still relevant in 2008? Are national strategies or a consistent force approach required?

Joe Grant: By and large, we agree with the outcomes and recommendations of the report. We see differences of nomenclature for community or neighbourhood policing—it has a variety of titles—throughout Scotland and the UK. Using common terms across Scotland will not improve services, but it will improve understanding and may lead to better engagement with the people for and with whom we police. We are not as critical as HMICS was in 2004, because much of what would be identified as best practice has already been adopted in Scotland. We have been less good at articulating the structure within which such best practice fits, and at packaging—or marketing—it. There is work to be done on packaging, which will aid better common understanding of community or neighbourhood policing by all the people of Scotland.

Bill Butler: Do you agree that such a framework must encompass both national strategies and local flexibility? Are those approaches complementary rather than contradictory?

Joe Grant: As a collection of words, the terms appear to be contradictory, but in practice they must be complementary. It is right that there should be a national framework, because that will ensure a common understanding and the common vision to which the police board conveners referred. The fact that such a vision is being set out and articulated is a positive development for police services in Scotland.

However, there is no homogeneous group of communities in Scotland—they are geographically and internally disparate and diverse. We have to police for and with all those communities, which is why the need exists for local flexibilities.

Bill Butler: That is all I have to ask. I am obliged, Mr Grant.

Paul Martin: What are your views on identifying the needs of rural communities compared to the needs of urban communities? On a recent committee visit to the Borders, it was evident that the challenges that are faced by officers in the Borders are different from those that are faced by those in Strathclyde.

Joe Grant: There are different approaches to policing in Scotland. In rural areas, there are fewer officers, but they play a wider range of roles. In urban areas, there are more officers but they tend to have narrower or more specialised roles. In rural communities, the officer will be the

community officer, the response officer and a few other things into the bargain. He or she will likely be subject to fewer abstractions—because of geography—but will be more likely to require a vehicle to get around and will rely far more heavily on the special constabulary in the area. As we have heard, in some areas the special constabulary is the policing response.

The two examples are necessarily different, both in the types of communities and in the geographic areas that we police. Establishing the need for each is, again, a matter for the tripartite relationship between the community, through the police officers, the chief officer and the local police boards. For me, how a community identifies its policing needs must be organic: it must come from the community and everyone else in the chain whose duty it is to provide.

Paul Martin: Despite the lack of crime in many communities compared to other parts of Scotland, those communities say that they want to see the local police officer as a reassurance. We are providing such officers not because serious crime is taking place in the area, but because the local community has demanded it. Other communities, in which a great deal of criminal activity takes place, might need that additional resource but do not get it because another community wants to be reassured. How do we deal with that?

Joe Grant: For sure, that tension exists. However, you must understand that we must provide a basic level of service. We can talk about three levels of service. The basic level of service—which might be what Paul Martin articulated—may, perhaps controversially, be felt by the recipients of that service to be the best service that we provide. There is also good service, and there is best service—that is what we are trying to identify through our discussions about community engagement and community policing. There will always be tensions, and chief officers and local commanders must make decisions. However, it would not be wise to ignore the needs, desires and articulated wishes of the communities that we police for and with.

Paul Martin: Concerns are often raised about community policing not being part of core policing and about performance management indicators not fully recognising the breadth of community policing activities. Are those concerns justified in Scotland? If so, how should they be addressed?

Joe Grant: That addresses the important questions of whether community policing is seen as part of core policing and whether there are tensions. You will have read our written submission; I do not intend to repeat it.

Internally, within the service, there are historical tensions. Community police officers did not work the full range of shifts: they worked only days and evenings and were rarely abstracted to football matches, although you might have had a different experience more recently. The idea was that they were to be visible in their communities. In effect, they were seen as a separate group of officers, and it was difficult to apply to them performance management methodology, including the "Scottish Policing Performance Framework". Why did we have officers in the communities? We were seeking to address qualitative but not necessarily quantitative issues. There remains a tension for any performance framework in that respect.

We must also recognise whose performance measures we are meeting. I believe that measurement of the activity and performance of police officers should come from the communities that we police. They should identify the issues: we should listen to them and be judged on our ability to solve the problems, whether through direct activity by police officers or by engaging and cajoling other service providers to provide solutions.

Paul Martin: I asked this question of academic witnesses who mentioned that it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of community police officers. Could it be measured by looking at what happens when there is no community police officer in a community? That happens throughout Scotland.

Joe Grant: Sure. I was going to say, "Let's not test that". The reality is that there are still too many areas without community police officers. Those areas can be looked at.

As we carry out the reconfiguration of community policing, while understanding that it is a part of the whole of service provision by police officers, we should perhaps consider what happens in areas where the change is an innovation. We heard about that in relation to Strathclyde this morning. We have imagined a solution, we are about to implement it, and at some point well down the road we will assess its success through evaluation. However, during the reconfiguration, perhaps we should embed an academic researcher to conduct contemporaneous research to assist in identifying key success factors and key hurdles. Identification of an appropriate performance measurement could be one of those.

Paul Martin: Is there an issue about performance measurement of community officers in urban, as compared to rural, environments? Are there different demands in those environments?

Joe Grant: There are, but there remains a need in each community. The communities may be disparate for a variety of reasons, but they are joined by their need to have the best possible

policing service and for solutions to their problems when the police can intervene, interact and implement solutions. That is the common factor.

Are the numbers of crimes detected and the number of cases that have gone through the courts the best quantitative measures that we can apply? No, they are not. We can do that work in a variety of ways, such as surveys and street surgeries. You spoke earlier about the hard-to-reach groups where there is a democratic deficit. Police officers can get out among those groups, such as young people and disabled people. That is where we should get our performance indicators—from the people with whom we are policing. Additionally, the police should report against those indicators and be accountable to communities' needs and wishes.

John Wilson: You referred to the Scottish Police Federation's visible street policing and community policing and the number of abstractions. Is there a better way of working? Does the SPF experience different operational methods in the different forces throughout Scotland?

11:45

Joe Grant: Abstractions are dealt with differently in different parts of Scotland. We hear that in Strathclyde—and indeed elsewhere, such as in Lancashire—abstractions are a real difficulty for police managers. We state in our written evidence that we cannot envisage a situation in which a police officer who is posted to a particular duty will never be called away to do something else. It is a bold fact that when there is an emergency or a major disaster, or sometimes something less than that, we need all hands to the pumps. In those circumstances, there is no time or, indeed, place for arguments about whose job it is to do something. Frankly, that flexibility is what makes us so useful and able to deal with events.

As I said, in our examination of neighbourhood policing we visited Lancashire, where an abstraction policy is in operation and all divisions monitor abstractions. They, too, accept that they will never eradicate abstractions, but the number has been reduced because of both the implementation of the policy and the monitoring.

John Wilson: You heard the conveners of the police boards on the previous panel. In the SPF's experience, how do different police forces operate abstractions? Are some forces more willing than others to abstract community officers, or do you have no feel for how different police forces operate community policing?

Joe Grant: By and large, the majority of forces and chief officers in Scotland seek to reduce the number of abstractions of community police officers. Like us, however, they understand that there is no place for an absolute diktat that there must be no abstractions. Such an approach would not deal with reality.

The differences between forces are not the result of the whim of chief officers. They arise from the needs that local communities describe to the police. Communities are saying more loudly that they want to see more police officers in the community and fewer elsewhere, and chief officers are responding to that. I am sure that you will hear about that later.

John Wilson: Do police forces provide appropriate leadership and management support for community policing? Do community officers receive sufficient training for their duties?

Joe Grant: Have we been trying hard to provide leadership and management support—the last part of which, I suppose, is training—in the police services across Scotland? Absolutely. Is there a renewed focus on those matters? Without a doubt, and I hope that that will continue. The chief police officers can best describe the situation to you, but I am satisfied that there is the right leadership. There is ample evidence of excellent delivery in Scotland.

John Wilson: Do officers who take on the community policing role receive sufficient training for them to understand what is expected of them when they deliver community policing and with whom they should engage?

Joe Grant: I do not spend an awful lot of time on community police officers' training. However, do I have a sense from speaking to community police officers that they receive appropriate information and training both in being introduced to the role and while they are performing it? Yes. However, I do not have a broad knowledge of the area.

Nigel Don: Good morning, Mr Grant. Thank you for being here earlier and listening to the first panel's comments, because that enables us to speed up.

Earlier, we heard all sorts of comments about partnership working with local authorities. What are the ingredients of successful partnership working? I am also interested to know your feelings about the importance or otherwise of the police being co-located with local authority offices.

Joe Grant: Your latter question is easier to answer first. We have not formed a view on co-location. Have we heard that there are positive aspects to it? Absolutely. We will support it if better service provision can be demonstrated, but I would like to hear more about it before giving a definitive view.

To go back to the essential features of community partnerships, it will come as no surprise when I say that it is all about communication and reaching understanding. Each organisation in a partnership has its own priorities and operating methods, guidelines and restrictions. If we can communicate effectively and understand each other's working environment, we can begin to break down some of the actual and perceived barriers that exist, identify common aims and methods of working towards them, and work jointly and efficiently.

Part of that has already been done. Each major local authority in Scotland that works with police officers has such a relationship with them, at least at sergeant level, and often beyond, depending on the size of the local authority. Malcolm Dickson talked about partnership in its broadest sense and mentioned

"making community safety and crime reduction a statutory responsibility"—[*Official Report*, *Justice Committee*, 27 May 2008; c 801.]

of community planning partnerships. That might add weight to the whole system, although we know that the partnerships are in their embryonic stages.

The police must aim to draw other agencies into the picture in a meaningful way. We around the table today, and beyond, know that others who are well beyond the police service can have an impact on crime and antisocial behaviour, and we have a role in engaging with those other elements of the public and private sectors.

Stuart McMillan: My question follows on partly from Nigel Don's question and partly from John Wilson's, and is also about something that was in your written submission. Your answer to question 5 states:

"SPF is not sufficiently *au fait* with the different models being used throughout Scotland and elsewhere and does not know of any comparative evaluations to offer examples of good practice."

Question 8 is about the impact of community policing initiatives on relations between the community and the police, and the prevention, detection and perceptions of crime and antisocial behaviour. Your answer contains the points that community policing

"a) improves community police relations

b) prevents crime, improves intelligence gathering and detection of crime and …

c) enhances public confidence in the police".

From your submission and your responses to the last few questions, and because of your answer to question 8, I thought that your answer to question 5 would contain some examples of good practice in community policing in Scotland. You mentioned Lancashire a few moments ago, but I thought that you would have more concrete information and evidence about Scotland in your answer to question 5.

Joe Grant: For sure, and crikey, we have been busy since we wrote to the committee. I will not repeat what I said about Lancashire, but we looked for good practice and at some of the different community policing models in Scotland and beyond. As I have said, and as the committee has heard this morning, there are many examples of good practice. In Edinburgh, there are neighbourhood action units, which work with other public services—in particular, housing—and the antisocial behaviour teams. In Tayside, the community liaison officers are now called community crime officers—a far more active phraseology. As the committee has heard this morning, and as we have discovered, in Grampian they talk about total communities, which seek to involve each of the public sector partners. In Strathclyde, we refer to community policing teams and community policing units.

Those are all examples of community policing. The terminology is inconsistent, which is partly why it is difficult to identify good practice. I am sure that the terminology confuses me as much as it confuses the committee. When we look into the systems and their various elements, we find that most, if not all, involve the features that we are beginning to understand amount to good practice, which are the six features that I mentioned in my answer to Mr Butler.

Cathie Craigie: I am sure that you are aware that the committee has been searching the globe as part of its inquiry. As a taxpayer, you will be pleased to know that we have been using all the modern technologies to do that. We have heard evidence from Chicago about the use of geographically focused teams to deliver community and response policing. What is your view of the appropriateness of such a model in a Scottish context? I do not know whether you have read that evidence. If you need me to go into more detail, I will.

Joe Grant: My understanding of the evidence from Chicago is that what they do there is geographical. We understand it to be sector beat—a variety of terminologies can be applied to such policing—which was widely practised in Scotland over many years. Instead of having a city-wide responsibility, the response officers there are allocated an area of the city and largely they stay there. Professor Skogan said that officers spend about 70 per cent of their time on the beat. Depending on precisely what he meant by that, we could probably match that in Scotland in many cases. There are some good features to what people in Chicago are doing—such as structured

community meetings, shared funding and working with voluntary groups—but their model for policing cover, while obviously new to them, is not entirely new here, as far as I can establish. What is different in Chicago is the coming together of what we understand as community officers and response officers. In Chicago, they are one and the same.

I will not repeat what I said earlier, but we strongly advocate no total separation of the roles. However, we do not think that the two roles could ever be fully amalgamated, either. I draw on Malcolm Dickson's evidence. He gave the comparator of the general practitioner and the paramedic, which probably describes fairly well how we see the situation. The novelty for us is the total coming together of each of the agencies, and the monthly meetings.

I do not know whether Wesley Skogan articulated it in his evidence to the committee, but in Edinburgh last year he said that there are difficulties in Chicago in continually engaging with people to ensure that it is not just the usual suspects—I shall not describe who they might be—who turn up to meetings. The difficulty is ensuring that the entire community is engaged with, not just a dozen or 50 people. Such challenges remain in Scotland, and are manifest in Chicago.

12:00

Stuart McMillan: Earlier this morning, we heard from Councillor Rooney about the length of time that an officer could or should spend as a community police officer. He gave the example of someone being a community police officer for only about three months. What period of time should an officer spend in that role?

Joe Grant: That is one of a variety of factors that should be considered. Perhaps the word that we should be using is "tenure". If we want to achieve what communities are asking for, which is consistency and sustainability in the policing response—and in saying that, communities are referring to people as well as to service provision—a realisable and achievable tenure, as Lancashire Constabulary has found, is two years. The force is not naive enough to think that all officers will be in post for that length of time—it knows that some will serve a community for only 18 months—but it hopes that others will do the job for much longer that that.

Lancashire Constabulary has improved the status of neighbourhood beat managers—I think that that is what they are called—both in terms of title and pay. Officers understand that their appointment is for two years and that, if they want to develop their careers, it is one of the steps that they must go through before they seek promotion. Forces can use a variety of methods to make it more likely that officers will go the distance and beyond, in what is, of course, a crucial job.

Stuart McMillan: On a recent visit to Motherwell, committee members met a couple of community police officers, who had been in the job for about three and half years and five and a half years. They seemed to be thriving in their role of CPO, and clearly they were getting a great deal of satisfaction from the job. You mentioned a period of two years, but those officers had three and a half and five and a half years' service. Surely CPOs can achieve much more if they spend a longer time in post.

You mentioned career development, which we also heard about in Motherwell. My understanding of what we heard was that, if an officer wants to progress in the force, they have to get out of community policing. That is different from what you said.

Joe Grant: For sure. I was recounting the situation in Lancashire—a policing situation that is not far from Scotland in geographical terms. Lancashire Constabulary says that, instead of an officer having to leave community policing if they want to progress their career, they should and must work in community policing before career development comes to them. Ultimately, the effect of that shift in thinking on policing and management cultures will make officers more willing to go into the CPO role and sustain it for some time. The two-year period that I mentioned is what Lancashire Constabulary aims for. Given that we have been practising community policing in Scotland for a long time, I am sure that many officers will have been in community policing for much longer than the three and a half to five and a half years that you mentioned. Barring the things that can intervene in any officer's career, there should be an achievable minimum period during which a community can expect an officer to be there for them.

The Convener: I call Cathie Craigie and ask her to be brief.

Cathie Craigie: Is there a role for streaming? Someone might join the police force and have no real interest in becoming part of the drugs squad or criminal intelligence department; they simply want to work in their community. What can the police force do for such people? Last week, we heard that every officer who joins the police force does so to serve their community. However, surely they can do that in different ways.

Joe Grant: For sure. I have not heard enough about streaming to give an extensive response to your question, but I believe that one of the duties of the police is to give communities officers who

are as rounded as possible. Of course, that does not mean that they have to spend three months, six months or a year in every department, but a rounded officer with a breadth of experience is best for communities, and I am concerned that streaming people in the service will result in single-track specialisms and blinkered views.

Before we reach that point, we should make it clear when we recruit individuals who wish to serve in the police that one of our major aims is to serve communities with community policing. In fact, there has been a shift in some forces, with raw recruits being streamed straight into community policing not only for their two-year probationary period but for another six to 12 months on top of that. Other forces ensure that in the two-year probationary period recruits get a breadth of knowledge before they are streamed into community policing. To my knowledge, however, there has not been a career's worth of streaming in community policing.

Nigel Don: Over the past few weeks, we have heard an awful lot about how community policing is really a partnership with other activities and agencies, particularly local councils. What distinctive contribution can police constables make to that partnership?

Joe Grant: In responding to your question, I will also set out how I think such partnerships should develop.

The police contribute energy, commitment, resources, experience, knowledge and, very often, leadership to partnerships, and are a crucial part of ensuring community wellbeing, safety and security. Paddy Tomkins, for example, described the police as a catalyst. That puts it very well, but it does not say it all. Very often, we become a partnership's only driving force, providing initiative, imagination and solutions, and getting other actors on board to sell the concept. We also end up sustaining the relationships in the partnership, and have to cajole others to play their statutory or other roles.

Although the police give lots to partnerships and play a very central—indeed, often defining—role, I would like them to reduce it, so that they can apply their energies to finding solutions. Community activists and representatives or elected officials could then take on the pivotal, directive role and use the police and other public services as their agents.

The Convener: Thank you, Mr Grant. The committee is obliged to you for your evidence, which, as ever, was the acme of clarity and brevity.

We will suspend briefly to change panels.

12:08

Meeting suspended.

12:15

On resuming—

The Convener: I welcome our third panel. We have with us Chief Superintendent Val McHoull, who is president of the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents; and Chief Superintendent Matt Hamilton, who is also from the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents. We will go straight to questions.

Bill Butler: Good afternoon, colleagues. I will begin with a question that I asked Mr Grant. The report that HMICS published in 2004 highlighted certain confusion and ambiguity around the term "community policing"—there were different approaches, labels and styles. The report stated:

> "While local creativity and responsiveness are desirable, HMIC considers that there is a need for more consistent force and national strategies in this area".

To what extent do you agree with that assessment? Does it still pertain in 2008?

Chief Superintendent Val McHoull (Association of Scottish Police Superintendents): We have the national public reassurance strategy, and I think that we have agreed this morning that there should be different models of community policing. The model of community policing in the Scottish Borders is different from that in Edinburgh city centre. There needs to be agreement not so much on a process or a model, but, rather, on an ethos. The Association of Scottish Police Superintendents believes that community policing is an ethos.

Bill Butler: Will you explain what you mean by that? My background is education, where people were always going on about ethos, which seemed a nebulous term. Can you define it for me? I would be grateful if you could.

Chief Superintendent McHoull: I think that our federation colleagues and others have used the word "vision". It is about our having an agreed understanding of what community policing is about. We heard about Chicago this morning. Another police force from which we have heard recently on the topic of community policing talked about the same cop, same neighbourhood ethos. It is about visible, accessible officers in the community, who are there not just to attend community meetings and run youth initiatives but to deal with crime in their area. They are there to understand their community—not just residents but business premises and so on—and the issues that arise and, collectively with other partners, to come up with long-term, proactive, preventive solutions. It is about early intervention and crime reduction.

Bill Butler: Do you wish to add to that, Chief Superintendent Hamilton?

Chief Superintendent Matt Hamilton (Association of Scottish Police Superintendents): My point is about what community policing does. I echo what my colleague said: the key factors should be prevention, intervention and collaboration. We can talk about those in more detail if you like. Every officer who is involved in a community should be quite clear about what their role is.

Bill Butler: I am grateful for that answer. In your submission you give a helpful general description—not a definition—of community policing as being

"locally accessible, accountable, responsive and visible within … communities".

I guess that that description encapsulates, as you put it in your submission,

"a variety of methods of service delivery".

First there is the vision, and then there is the process through which you deliver it. How can you achieve that vision when the pressures and concerns that arise in a service that is located in a rural community are different—certainly in degree—from those that arise in a service that is located in an urban community, or an area where there is a rural and urban mix?

Chief Superintendent Hamilton: The key is that they are different and require different service delivery. Community policing is the model in a rural setting—we liken it to a total policing model that will be able to react to anything that happens in the community. We understand that things will happen with which officers will need specialist assistance, but nevertheless, when the specialists move out, the officers will still police that community and deliver that service.

The community policing model is embedded in rural policing, but it can equally be embedded in urban policing. It should, in effect, be the bedrock of policing: if we are going to build policing from the bottom to the top, we should view community policing as the foundation.

You have heard in previous evidence that, in years gone by, the community police officer may well have been the first resource to be abstracted. We suggest that the community police officer should in fact be the last option, bearing in mind that that model is the foundation that supports the rest of police service delivery.

Bill Butler: Do you mean that, in rural areas, communities are much more easily identifiable and discrete, and that in order to get the best that community policing can deliver in terms of engagement, visibility and identification we must try our best to transplant that ethos to create various villages within conurbations such as Glasgow or Edinburgh? Would you go that far, or is that too fancy?

Chief Superintendent Hamilton: I do not think that it is—if you examine the urban areas, you can see that there are areas that identify themselves, such as areas within Dundee, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh. That is not too much to ask.

Chief Superintendent McHoull: The difference between community policing in rural areas and community policing in urban areas is to do with the history. Originally, all officers were community officers, because they had the time to get to know their beat and the people who lived on it and their concerns and issues. The demand, the pace and the complexity of policing pushed officers into cars, going from call to call, and therefore they no longer had that contact and engagement with the community.

The pace of change has perhaps been slower in rural areas. One of the first things that was said this morning was about the acceptance that, in rural areas, every officer is the community officer. For example, in the Scottish Borders, there is an expectation that every officer will act as a community officer. On top of that, there is a different layering, in terms of the five local integration officers who carry out the long-term multi-agency planning work, but there is not a specific need to have officers whose job it is to stay on foot in their area and get to know their community, because that has not been taken away from them to the same extent that it has in the urban areas.

Bill Butler: I am obliged.

The Convener: The issue of performance management indicators not reflecting the depth and involvement of community policing activity has been raised with the committee. Do you think that they accurately reflect that activity? If not, what can be done about it?

Chief Superintendent McHoull: We are moving in the direction of being aware of more qualitative issues. One of the performance indicators that would be specific to evaluating the benefit of community policing relates to crime reduction and reduction in antisocial behaviour. The Scottish Police Federation evidence referred to a change of terminology in Tayside from community liaison officers to community crime officers. That is important, because we believe that community beat officers should respond to and investigate calls to do with low-level crimes and antisocial behaviour. Crime reduction should be the biggest measure of how things are working.

The Convener: Do you agree with that, Mr Hamilton?

Chief Superintendent Hamilton: Yes. I certainly agree that, in the past, greater emphasis has been put on crime detection; indeed, the key performance indicators to which police forces have worked have predominantly been to do with crime detection. However, greater emphasis is put on the quality stuff in the new policing performance framework, such as whether people feel safer in their communities.

Paul Martin: I am sure that the witnesses heard what Councillor Rooney said about abstractions and Strathclyde joint police board's policy to ensure that abstractions do not happen. How effective do you think that policy will be? Have you heard about it before?

Chief Superintendent McHoull: I think that Mr Rooney was asked to give a cast-iron guarantee that officers would never be abstracted. Of course, such a guarantee can never be given, but forces are putting much more effort into planned events as opposed to unplanned events, during which it will often be a case of all hands to the pump. Let us consider T in the Park in Tayside as an example of a planned event. That event is now policed on a rest-day working basis, which is expensive but is an alternative to moving officers from their communities. Community policing is important when such events are being run. It is important to engage with local communities that are concerned about the size of such events in their area. They will be doubly concerned if their community beat officers are taken away to police the event. Tayside Police therefore chose to pay for rest-day working. Police officers must come from somewhere—that issue was raised with Mr Rooney when football matches were being discussed. Sometimes a more expensive alternative must be used.

Paul Martin: Officers must come from some part of the force. Should things then be prioritised? Should officers who are involved in tracking and monitoring sex offenders be asked to police T in the Park, rather than community police officers being asked to do that? How should we prioritise abstractions?

Chief Superintendent McHoull: That will always depend on the individual event. We have stripped officers from specialisms to police events that were the size of the G8 summit to the extent that those specialisms were closed down.

Chief Superintendent Hamilton: Big events would not have been properly planned if they did not involve community policing. The G8 summit is a great example. A year before it, community policing was introduced in the local area to mitigate the summit's effects. It was introduced so that there would be a lead-in to and a lead-out from the big event. The Association of Scottish Police Superintendents understands that community policing must be an integral part of the planning for big events.

John Wilson: The G8 summit and T in the Park have been mentioned. A number of forces were involved in policing the G8 summit, and substantial costs were associated with that policing. There has been some debate about whether those costs were fully recovered. T in the Park is, in effect, a private event. Chief Superintendent McHoull said that using officers' rest days, as opposed to taking officers out of communities, to police it is expensive for Tayside Police. Does Tayside Police recover all the costs of policing T in the Park or does it bear the costs as a result of the policy that has been adopted?

Chief Superintendent Hamilton: I have been the commander for T in the Park for the past couple of years. Tayside Police recovers the costs of the rest-day policing, so there is no cost to the local community. Obviously, the organisers of the event must pay the relevant amount. The community policing that takes place is similar to that which took place at the G8 summit. T in the Park moves in and hits the Kinross area big style, and, with the local community, local community policing must ensure that the area can recover after the event. That is the whole purpose of building community policing into the planning for the event.

12:30

John Wilson: Thank you—you have answered my question. I was just interested in the cost of policing events and in whether Tayside Police had to bear the brunt of the cost without being able to recover it.

Paul Martin: How are abstractions monitored? Some chief constables take the issue seriously, but they will have competing priorities. Is it sometimes difficult for them to deal with abstractions, and will they sometimes allow them in order to deal with initiatives that arise? How can we ensure that there are no abstractions? Could there be a more effective monitoring process than what is in place at the moment? The rights and responsibilities of the chief constables are in statute. What Councillor Rooney says, what Kenny MacAskill says, or what I say, is absolutely irrelevant—it might sound good to the public, but what does it actually mean?

Chief Superintendent Hamilton: You make a good point. However, as a local divisional commander, I feel that the method of monitoring is clear if you listen to the local community. People in a local community that has had a community officer—or whatever terminology is used—for the past two years will not be long in telling you that they are getting a bit fed up with that community

officer being continually taken away to do other work. If the police service and the local commanders listen to the community, that is an accurate way of monitoring whether things are right or not.

Margaret Smith: The committee has heard that community planning provides

"a ready made mechanism to deliver benefits across the spectrum of policing and wellbeing at a local level".

What scope is there for community planning to develop innovative forms of community policing and partnership working? Can you give us any examples from your experience?

Chief Superintendent Hamilton: There are a lot of examples of how community planning has developed community policing or community delivery of policing. Good examples exist in West Lothian, which my colleague, Chief Superintendent McHoull, will know more about than I do.

Examples have focused on dealing with underage drinking and the antisocial behaviour that stems from it. Partners have worked closer together as part of the community planning vision. Earlier, colleagues spoke about the vision and the ethos, and the vision is there in the community planning agenda. All the partners in the community share that vision. It complements the policing vision for the area and, I am sure, the health service vision and the local authority vision. However, the ultimate aim of that collective vision is for members of the public to receive a more joined-up service that is long term and sustainable.

Nigel Don: I raised a point earlier with the councillors about the appropriate size of local planning partnership and community policing partnership areas. I got the impression that, in different places, the size of those areas might be different. Do you think that the areas are relatively easy to define, even if in some places they are the size of one ward and in other places they are the size of two wards? I am not worried about the detail, but is it clear how we can choose the areas and make them work?

Chief Superintendent McHoull: The areas vary in size. In Edinburgh, some council services have been aligned to neighbourhood action units, rather than the other way round.

The initiative in West Lothian to which my colleague alluded covers all West Lothian. It arose from a multi-agency, problem-solving, community-focused group that has been considering issues of alcohol-fuelled youth disorder, as has been instanced in the press in the past couple of days. Such an initiative is more beneficial than what happened in the past, when a response unit would arrive only when there were particular issues in a particular street and would probably move the kids on. We are talking now about being aware of the community's concerns, using analysis to identify the exact hot spots and test purchasing. In addition, we use youth workers and alcohol counsellors, and speak to the kids and their parents about the impact that the kids are having on their own health and their community—the approach is much more rounded.

The size of the areas in which we operate can vary greatly. However, provided that there are mechanisms for getting the community's concerns in and for partnership working—whether that is done through beat meetings or community planning partnerships—the size of an area is not an issue. I do not have a definitive area size in mind for the approach because it works on many different levels.

Nigel Don: I hear what you say. I guess that I am not looking for a specific initiative, which could be carried out over any size of area. My question is more whether we are trying to encourage the police to move towards a model that has a locally defined area within which community policing is seen in partnership with as many other agencies as you can sensibly involve. Do you foresee difficulties in defining that area? Will the area be definable but different in different places?

Chief Superintendent Hamilton: Generally, local authority areas across the country are aligned with local police command areas. We are comfortable with that set-up, which does not restrict how we deliver our service.

Margaret Smith: I want to pick up on the issue of public reassurance, which was mentioned in your submission. Chief Superintendent McHoull talked about work in West Lothian to tackle underage drinkers, which is a high-profile issue. I presume that, through the media for example, members of the public can get some sort of feedback about what is happening and whether it has been successful. However, an awful lot of community policing is much more low level. It seems to me that one of the problems, which I have probably been negative about in the past, is that perhaps the police are not as good at going back to the community to give them feedback about something that has happened. Some of that may be due to the sensitivity of the information involved—perhaps because people have been charged. How do you get round that?

Chief Superintendent McHoull: The communications strategy for community policing must be twofold. It is about not just feeding in the concerns, but feeding back what has been done in order to provide reassurance. Lothian and Borders Police have looked at impact assessments after certain incidents, particularly for the signal crimes

that greatly affect the community's fear of crime and so on. Feeding back information to the community is very much part of the process, whether that is done formally, through sophisticated platforms, or informally, through the community beat officer chatting with local shopkeepers. In the capital partnership model in the city centre, the sector inspector has a specific role in feeding information through the tasking and co-ordinating group, and feeding back the results.

Chief Superintendent Hamilton: Much is said about the value of community councils. I think that most people would agree that there are certain constants in community councils, one of which is that the local elected member attends the meetings; the other is that the local community police officer is usually there, too, unless something drastic happens to prevent that. Much information can be passed on at that level.

The community officers also bring to that meeting crime figures and information about what has happened since the previous meeting. We are happy to share that information—although, obviously, we have to bear in mind the restrictions that the Lord Advocate's guidelines place on it. There has never been reluctance to share that information from a policing perspective.

The Convener: We have heard evidence from Professor Wesley Skogan, in Chicago, with which you are familiar. Do you feel that the Chicago project could be successfully imported into Scotland?

Chief Superintendent Hamilton: Yes. As we heard from Joe Grant, the principles are similar to those of some of the policing models that we have had here, particularly in rural areas, so it would fit quite nicely in Scotland. We have also heard from Kathleen O'Toole, from Boston—I think that you were at the same meeting, convener. She talked about what she termed the rebirth of community policing in Boston in the 1980s, which focused on crime reduction and early intervention. We see those as the important aspects and do not believe that we should get hung up on the name of any particular model. It should be very much about the delivery on the ground.

The Convener: I think that we can take that as the association's view.

Stuart McMillan: Earlier this morning, we heard about the tenure of a community police officer. How long do you think that someone should be in that role?

Chief Superintendent McHoull: Many variables must be taken into account, one of which is the career development of the officer, and not just from the point of view of progression and whether any given officer should have worked in different departments or whatever before they can be promoted. I conduct recruitment interviews, and when I ask young people why they want to join the police, nine times out of 10 they talk about part of the attraction being the variety of the job and the fact that they can work in many different specialisms.

I do not think that we should be restrictive in telling officers that they must serve as community officers for five years or whatever. That would limit them. However, although I do not believe that we should have streaming—lots of different police forces within a police force—I know a lot of community officers who have worked the same area for 10 or 15 years and who intend to do so for the next 10 or 15 years. There is absolutely nothing in force tenure policies to prevent officers from remaining in an area; equally, we should not be restrictive in forcing them to remain in that area.

Chief Superintendent Hamilton: We should never be obstructive to change. I can give the committee real-life evidence of a number of letters that I have received from local areas in which people complain about our moving a community officer, telling us, "This is the finest community officer that we have ever had". However, once the officer eventually moves on, the person who replaces them then becomes the finest community officer that the community has ever had. The important point is that we should always try to improve on the previous person who held the role. We need to have the strength in depth and the systems and methods of policing in place. That will enable us to ensure that community policing is not solely dependent on an individual, but that there is much more strength to what we deliver in community policing.

Nigel Don: You will have heard what Joe Grant said earlier about what the police bring to partnership working. Do you agree with him—I suspect that you will in terms of initiative and leadership, which we recognise as characteristics of our policemen—that the police should perhaps not be leading the partnerships?

Chief Superintendent McHoull: I do not think that we should always lead; which partner agency should take the lead depends on the particular initiative. There are now areas of community policing in which we would find it difficult to operate without our partners, one of which is the funding of community officers.

12:45

Chief Superintendent Hamilton: We should not get hung up on who it is that steps up to the plate; the important thing is that somebody does so. However, we should also be keen to ensure that it is not always the police who step up to the

plate. We should never be precious about that. The important thing is about what is delivered, and we clearly have an important part to play in that.

Nigel Don: I have been trying to build a model in my head of a locally defined group of people that includes police officers, community wardens, the important people in the council who deliver, for example, social work services and education, and perhaps some health workers as well. We need to build a model that enables people to understand what they are collectively trying to deliver.

Now, however, I am trying to tease out who should be leading that. Do you think that the leadership role should be filled by the police, the local authority or, perhaps, A N Other?

Chief Superintendent Hamilton: I think—and I am sure that the association feels the same—that the single outcome agreements give some direction in that regard. As the matter clearly sits within the remit of the community planning partnership, that would be the key engine that would move the agenda forward.

Nigel Don: So the model already exists.

Chief Superintendent Hamilton: Exactly. Whether it is working as well as it could be is another issue. I am sure that it can work better.

The Convener: Thank you for giving your evidence in a concise and clear manner.

We will suspend briefly to allow our witnesses to change over.

12:46

Meeting suspended.

12:47

On resuming—

The Convener: The final witness today is Chief Constable John Vine, of Tayside Police and the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland.

Bill Butler: I will ask you the same question that I have asked our previous witnesses. The HMICS report of 2004 highlighted some confusion and ambiguity around the term, "community policing". It stated:

"While local creativity and responsiveness are desirable, HMIC considers that there is a need for more consistent force and national strategies in this area".

To what extent do you think that that assessment was correct then, and how relevant is it now?

Chief Constable John Vine (Tayside Police and Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland): I agree with much of what the HMICS said and recommended. There is confusion over terminology, which could be improved. Some of the confusion arises from a desire to make an impact locally and to reassure the public that the service that they are receiving is tailored to what the chief constable of their area thinks they need and want. Some of the catchy titles are designed to provide reassurance about quality of service delivery.

We should not, however, impose a national model that stifles local initiatives. Yesterday, I was on patrol up at Kinloch Rannoch with some of my community officers. I admit that it is not a place where I often go on patrol. All the officers that I met were community officers—none was designated differently from the others—and they all get involved in a broad range of policing. That division uses the designation "community crime officer" to emphasise to local people that it is not about having tea and biscuits with them or running youth initiatives, but about tackling crime and antisocial behaviour in their area. We use the title to convey that and to try to make an impact.

Overall, there is scope for rationalisation of terminology, not least because you, as politicians, and other key stakeholders need to measure what forces are doing. Other witnesses today have been asked about how many community officers are in a particular force. It would be very difficult for the Scottish police service to define them and give you that information, because we call them different things. In addition, those whom we call community officers are supplemented by many other police officers who, for part or much of their time, perform community tasks. Nevertheless, rationalisation in terminology may help.

Bill Butler: Essentially, despite "rationalisation in terminology", as you put it, you are saying that community policing is about local flexibility and national strategies being complementary rather than contradictory in order to ensure that, as you say, although we can have locally tailored initiatives, it is basically the same suit.

Chief Constable Vine: They have to be complementary and we must tailor the response to local need, which varies enormously. The committee has talked about the rural/urban dimension, but that is only one dimension. Different communities, depending on whether they are wealthy or not so wealthy, will want to have contact with the police through different mechanisms. For example, in some communities it is difficult to get the public to talk to the police as readily as they do in other communities. We must therefore tailor our responses and work with our partners to ensure that we reach the community and find out what is going on and what people's needs are. We must tailor the response locally depending on geography, the urban/rural dimension and the type of community with which we are dealing. Is it a wealthy middle-class

community or is it one of the poorer housing schemes that exist in many of our cities?

Bill Butler: You have given the committee some general descriptions. Can you now give us specific examples of the way in which community policing is delivered differently in different communities within your police force?

Chief Constable Vine: In Kinloch Rannoch there is a community cafe project, which tends to be the community centre for the area; it is where most people would congregate. Having the police officer drop in there regularly is a model that would work for that community.

In some urban areas—for example, Dundee and Perth—we work closely with the community warden service, which now provides much more contact with the community. In Perth, we are doubling the number of designated community officers and we are increasing the number of officers who patrol on bicycle. Those officers have been well received because they are perceived to be far more accessible and available than officers in cars. There is a range of initiatives on which we have given evidence in our submission.

Going back to Mr Butler's original question, although they are called different things throughout Scotland, you will see that many of the initiatives have similar facets. It is all about having police officers who are well known in a community, who build up trust and contact with the community and who spend a substantial amount of time building relationships not only with the community but with key partners in the local authority and other organisations. I have no doubt that there will be some questions about continuity, which is important in community policing.

Bill Butler: You are essentially saying that the key elements are community engagement, accessibility and responsiveness to the community's needs.

Chief Constable Vine: Yes. Those are the traits that you will find running through all the initiatives that are mentioned in the ACPOS submission.

Bill Butler: I am obliged.

The Convener: I refer you to paragraph 12 of your submission, which suggests to me that community policing is not viewed as a part of core policing and that performance management indicators do not reflect community policing activities. Is that the case?

Chief Constable Vine: Traditionally, that has been the case. The "Scottish Policing Performance Framework" represents a good attempt to measure the qualitative element of service delivery, which in the past the service has neglected.

There has been a cultural problem, as well, in that community policing has not been seen to be terribly exciting work for police officers. As Chief Superintendent McHoull said in her evidence to the committee, when she interviews people who want to join the police, they have an impression that the work will be exciting and varied, but community work has not traditionally been seen to provide excitement and variety. As police leaders, we must make it clear to recruits that the connection with the community is extremely important throughout their careers, and especially at the beginning. It is only by speaking to the public and getting to grips with problems at local level that they will gain the breadth of experience that will make them good police officers throughout their careers.

We have had a lot of work to do, culturally, to get the right people committed to community police work for a considerable time. I will give an example of how we have done that. In my force, I have created lead constables. When I have been able to do so—for example, after the 2002 police pay award—I have given more money to uniformed constables. Most of my special priority payments, as they are called, go to uniformed patrol officers. I do that in order to keep experienced officers in communities for as long as I can. I want to make community work attractive to experienced officers and to stop them looking for 9-to-5 jobs at headquarters, or for promotions that would take them out of their communities. That initiative is an example of how we are addressing the cultural issues that have surrounded community policing in the past.

The Convener: I will pursue that a little further. I am a tiny bit concerned about what you said about encouraging people not to apply for promotion but to stay in community policing. It would worry me if someone did that, because it would demonstrate a lack of ambition.

Chief Constable Vine: We have to cater for people's ambition. Any police service has a wonderful array of opportunities for police officers and we cannot stop people progressing their careers if they want to, but sometimes there is a direct contradiction between the pursuit of those legitimate ambitions and the desirability of keeping in a community the familiar face of a well-respected and well-known officer.

Officers tend—this is true of the officers I was with yesterday—to build up a great deal of knowledge and intelligence about incomers to the community and where in the community the criminals are located. If we do not provide some continuity of posting, all that intelligence and experience is lost, with a consequent diminution in the crime-tackling service that we can provide. It is necessary for a chief constable to strike a balance

that enables officers to progress their careers, but which provides the continuity that the public—overwhelmingly, in my experience—want to see in this area of policing.

The Convener: I will not disappoint you—I will move on to abstractions. As you heard, this morning's evidence fully corroborated our previous evidence that abstractions are a problem. Could the methodology of community policing or of policing in general be changed so that more protection is provided from abstractions?

Chief Constable Vine: In practical terms, it will be extremely difficult to do that. All chief constables are highly conscious of the need to provide visible community policing and are doing their level best to ensure continuity of such provision, but we cannot say that there will never be circumstances in which we will have to use those officers for other purposes.

13:00

It starts from a slightly false premise in that community officers—the ones that you and I are thinking of, who work in the communities all the time—are supplemented by officers on shift. Some of those officers will be driving road policing units—traffic cars—and some will be detectives who are working in the community. Other officers are ready to provide a response 24 hours a day. All those officers supplement the efforts of the community officers and liaise with the community officers, so it is not about just the officers whom we think of as being dedicated to the community because they are supplemented by all those other officers who, when they go to calls in the community, will feed intelligence through to the community officer and pick up on issues just as the community officer would. They do not have all the time the community officer has to deal with community issues; nevertheless, I expect them to involve themselves in problem solving in the community.

However, as you have heard from other witnesses, there will always be events that mean that we must abstract community officers. During the G8 summit, I was asked by various groups who the officers in the public order unit were—the officers who were climbing into the backs of vans to respond in case there was in any part of Scotland a riot that might have been associated with protests at the G8 summit. They were often referred to as the Scottish police riot squad, whom we were training at a disused hospital in the Strathclyde area. The answer is that those vans were full of community officers, road policing officers, detectives, officers who were involved in sex offender management and officers who normally spend their time in police control rooms. It is the nature of our policing that we have generalists whom we must abstract for specific purposes when the time arises. They then go back to their general police duties, which in many cases involve policing communities.

Margaret Smith: Is there appropriate leadership of, and management support for, community policing within police forces? Do you believe that community officers receive sufficient training for their roles, which appear to be expanding?

Chief Constable Vine: In short, no. There is a course on community policing at the Scottish Police College, which is attended generally by inspectors from all over Scotland who are involved in community policing, but there is room for improvement.

All sorts of initiatives are run by individual forces to fill the gap. For example, in my force we have sergeants coming into the training centre regularly and, as part of their training, we give them the opportunity to listen to the current thinking on community policing. It is an opportunity to share best practice. The sharing of best practice between forces could be improved, and the training could be improved in terms of making officers aware of current thinking, best practice and operational style. That is my personal view.

There is a lot of on-the-job learning at the moment. That is no bad thing, and it gives the force an opportunity to see whether a particular officer is cut out for a community policing role. We want to establish very quickly a community's trust in its identified officer. As Chief Superintendent Hamilton said earlier, we find that communities latch on to certain personalities. A lot of our community officers put in a lot of their own time and get so enmeshed in the community that they will do their eight hours of police duty but will return in the evening, on their rest days and in their own time to take part in community activity. That is very commendable. That happens a lot in Scottish policing, but it is often not recognised.

Margaret Smith: I have a practical question about handover from one community officer to a new one coming into an area. Is there a general handover procedure, or does it vary from force to force?

Chief Constable Vine: It varies not only from force to force but probably from division to division and section to section. It depends on whether we can provide an overlap period between the incoming and outgoing officers. In my experience, that is often worth while, if it can be done, because it introduces the new officer to key players in the community. However, it is not always possible because we have to make best use of our resources and it must be remembered that community policing is not our only priority.

Our performance indicators do not measure quality of service very much. As I said to the convener, we are trying to do that with the new performance framework. Until now, measurement of policing has largely been quantitative, as Chief Superintendent Hamilton said, and has probably been led by success in achieving high detection rates. In my experience, although a community might be disturbed if its crime figures are going through the roof, lower crime figures per se do not necessarily reassure a community about the quality of service delivery or make it feel safe and secure, which is the holy grail for which we all strive. We try to convince the community that we care about what happens to it, that we can help, and that there is someone whom people can recognise easily and call upon for assistance.

Margaret Smith: I am concerned that you said that a period of overlap is not always possible. I agree with what you said earlier about continuity. If a force is losing an officer who has built experience, who knows where the criminals are and who the key people are, even a few days of overlap would be worth while.

Chief Constable Vine: I agree entirely, and where we can do that, it should happen. However, I cannot sit here and guarantee that it is common practice throughout Scottish policing because I am not aware that it is.

Margaret Smith: You made a comment about lower crime figures not necessarily reassuring communities, but reassurance for communities is fundamental. What are your thoughts about engagement between the police and communities, and what evidence is there of different mechanisms being used across Scotland? What is most effective? Also, I asked a question earlier about the importance of feedback to communities at the end of initiatives and so on. How is that going?

Chief Constable Vine: There were a number of questions there. I will start at the beginning.

As previous speakers have indicated, community planning and the single outcome agreements are the way forward. These days, it is inconceivable for me to sit here as a chief constable and say that I and my organisation can provide communities with all the reassurance that is required. We need to work in partnership, particularly with the local authority and other key players in the area, to provide a collective sense of community safety and reassurance. That is working well in many parts of Scotland.

Where it is difficult for all of us is that I am not entirely sure that there is a map or whiteboard somewhere—perhaps it is in St Andrew's house—that plots all the community partnerships and assesses the success or otherwise of their achievements. There is, therefore, work to be done on the sharing of best practice or—perhaps more important—sharing of information on what people have tried in one place that has not worked and is about to be started somewhere else. Community planning is a key area.

A good example is the fire service, which has been very good about coming on board with us in the safe drive stay alive initiative, which tries to take the message about safe driving to young drivers to address the number of serious crashes that involve young drivers in Scotland. The fire service also goes on patrol with community officers in Dundee to look at fire safety issues, at closes where there might have been rubbish fires, or at vandalism that might cause danger.

We also have plenty of examples of the kinds of co-location and joint working that have already been mentioned. Our sex offender management unit is co-located with Dundee social work department, and case management units in the force are co-located with the fiscal service. That joint working is replicated in many other initiatives throughout Scotland.

As for feedback, you have put your finger on a particularly interesting and important issue. Every month, we send out 600 questionnaires on quality of service not only to people who have had contact with our force but to members of the general public who read about us in the newspaper. We put a lot of effort into getting that information and finding out what people think of the service. Such activity is carried out variably throughout Scotland; instead of doing it separately, the police should join up with local authorities in the community planning partnership to ensure that we have more of a sense of, and keep tabs on, what the community thinks about the collective effort of the police, the local authority, the fire and health boards and so on. I do not think that that has been done very much.

I could highlight many other initiatives. For example, I got from politicians the idea of having surgeries. I thought, "If they can do them, why can't I?" They have been very well received. People queue up to see me, and I will see anyone. I am not fussed who I see, really. If we use our imagination, we will find lots of models for getting feedback.

The police have been notoriously bad at telling people about the outcomes of inquiries. Our surveys suggest that we give such feedback in about 52 per cent of cases. I do not know what the figure is for other forces—or even if they look at the issue—but, in my experience, 52 per cent is quite high. The figure is much lower in many forces, but I have told my commanders that I want that figure to be increased. I believe that we can do that now through technology such as Airwave

terminals, which are not only radio terminals but mobile phones that can be used to give people the opportunity to call community officers directly. Moreover, the mobile data that are coming out from police forces throughout Scotland provide further technological means of reducing bureaucracy and contacting people.

However, it is a matter of changing the culture. We need to get across to our officers that the public are not just some amorphous mass but individual consumers of our service who are interested in the outcome of what might be their once-in-a-lifetime call to the police.

John Wilson: Thank you for staying for the whole meeting and listening to other witnesses' responses. I am sure that someone or some department in St Andrew's house has mapped out the entire community planning process. I certainly hope that, unlike in previous years, the process of gathering information from community planning organisations will not be a tick-box exercise.

The Convener: Such cynicism!

John Wilson: I say that from experience, convener.

As you will have heard, we received evidence from Professor Skogan from Chicago on the use of geographically based teams to deliver community and response policing. Would such methods be appropriate either in Scotland or in your force area?

Chief Constable Vine: Very much so, but problems lie in how we define communities and whether we can get people to buy in to such definitions. Someone said earlier that that might be easier in rural areas. That point was not pursued in questioning, but I think that it might be easier because rural areas probably have more of a defined sense of community than do the suburbs of large cities. It is more difficult to define where communities in large cities begin and end. We have had a go at it in all forces in Scotland; it is where we get the name "division" from—it is a division of a city or an area. We have used police criteria to define that, but we have not really thought about defining communities in the same way that the people in Chicago have done.

13:15

Once you have defined a community, the next challenge is to get people who are representative of it to come to a meeting. You have heard a lot about community councils. When we consider what mechanism we can use to contact and liaise with the community, we tend to think of the community councils, of which I think there are 66 in my force area. I often go along to community council meetings, and sometimes I find 30 people there and sometimes only four, five or six people there. The age range and ethnicity of those people does not necessarily reassure me that they are representative of the whole community.

The point that you raise is well worth pursuing. We would have to redefine for forces which mechanism should be used. Should we use community councils? Should they be remodelled, revamped or re-energised in some way if they are to have a new function? If we did not use them, what else would we use?

In middle-class communities, there are active neighbourhood watch schemes. However, in poorer housing-scheme communities, often there are not active neighbourhood watch schemes, because some people do not want to talk to the police. Whatever model was chosen would have to take account of a variety of factors to work effectively.

The model to which you referred is entirely appropriate to policing in Scotland. I tried to do something similar a while ago in Dundee with the Work Foundation, which had a concept called public value. The foundation worked with the Metropolitan Police, Surrey Police and Tayside Police. We held focus groups with people in particular areas of Dundee and asked them who we should speak to and how we could get their buy-in and ownership of the delivery of police services in their community. We came across all the issues that I have tried to articulate to Mr Wilson, which are not easy to overcome. However, the model is worth pursuing. I am quite happy to go out to Chicago to examine it.

John Wilson: Aren't we all. It would be useful for the committee to get sight of the Work Foundation research, to help shape our view of what we are trying to do. I am sure that the Work Foundation would have compared what happens in Surrey, the London area and Dundee.

Chief Constable Vine: I have a report, which I can send you without any difficulty.

The Convener: That would be useful.

Nigel Don: I want to tease out something that you have been around the houses with, Mr Vine. I return to the issue of performance management. In a previous existence, I was a factory engineer. It was wonderful when the engineers were all sitting in the workshops drinking tea, because that meant that the packing lines were running. It would be wonderful if your police were all sitting back at the shop drinking tea because the world outside was wonderful. When I was an engineer, I could measure the fact that the world was wonderful, because I could measure the output of the packing lines. Do you have adequate measures of the world outside being wonderful, other than lower crime rates or greater customer

satisfaction? Do all the measures exist, or do you and the academic world need to scratch your heads and think of other measures?

Chief Constable Vine: I am always happy to get expert advice from anyone. I will listen to anyone who can offer me answers about how to address public perception of crime levels. I can go to a community meeting and talk until I am blue in the face about how crime has fallen in my force area, but people will still fall about in the audience not believing me. By the way, crime has substantially fallen in my area over the past few years—indeed, it fell by another 8 per cent last year. According to Endsleigh Insurance Services, Dundee is now the third safest place in Britain. I thought I would just get in that plug.

The simple answer to the question is yes. Performance measures are fine if we are talking about quantitative measures, but the holy grail is getting across to communities the message about the relative safety and security of their community. We are in the here and now, and not living as we were 10 or 20 years ago, when people's image of the police was bobbies on the beat, just as they saw on "Dixon of Dock Green". We need to get the message across to different sectors of the community. For example, older people have a greater fear of crime than younger people do, despite the fact that, statistically, younger people are more at risk of violent crime than older people ever have been.

It would be really useful if the academics helped us by providing more sophisticated measures. The problem for policing is that we cannot spend too much of our time measuring ourselves; we have to get on and deliver the service. The police service in England and Wales has gone down a blind alley, in contrast to what we are doing in Scotland. When I left Lancashire Constabulary in 2000 to come north to become chief constable of Tayside Police, the force had to meet 40 to 50 performance indicators. If a force has 40 to 50 priorities, it has no priorities. We must try to reassure the public using the minimum set of performance indicators that we can get away with, otherwise we simply bog ourselves down in bureaucracy and have no officers out on the street. Does that answer the question?

Nigel Don: It goes a long way to clarifying my thinking that perhaps we need to get somebody outside of the police to help us to analyse the situation.

Chief Constable Vine: Yes. I am quite relaxed about that.

Stuart McMillan: Previous witnesses spoke about tenure—the length of time that an officer spends in a community policing role. What period should an officer spend as a CPO? What is your view on such tenure?

Chief Constable Vine: In my force, we do not have a term. We used to have a tenure of post policy, which meant that, after a period of time, an officer had to leave their post and be redeployed to another position. I abolished that, because the policy was dysfunctional. As you say, many forces have tenure policies, although I am not entirely sure where they all sit at the moment. Managers need to manage staff effectively. The people who we put in the community have to cut the mustard. I want our officers to be out there, well received by the community and delivering the goods. If an officer provides community reassurance and prevents and detects crime—by which I mean arresting people—they can stay in post for as long as they want.

When I came to Tayside, I found that the inspectors and sergeants who were in charge of sections had moved on too quickly. I said that all inspectors should be in their section for at least three years. I also said that divisional commanders should command their division for at least three years—in practice, they often do so for longer. In my view, three years is the minimum, unless, of course, I find that an inspector or commander is not performing. In that case, they might not be there for quite as long.

The situation needs to be left open to good management. I encourage all those who are in such posts to remain in post for a considerable period of time. Often, the complaint of the public is that officers do not stay in post for long enough. Tenure is an important issue.

I mentioned the lead constable initiative, which arose because I was looking for incentives to motivate people to say, "Community policing is really what I want to do. I joined the police to be a good cop and to police the community." I wanted to send a message to my workforce and to new recruits that that was a good thing, instead of wanting to jump into a car, run from call to call and record crime. I wanted to provide an alternative career for people who wanted to police the community, so that they did not feel that they needed to better themselves financially by becoming a sergeant or an inspector.

The lead constable initiative is not common practice, but I think that it should be considered nationally. We need a way of finding a different career route for people who want to stay as constables but who also want to better themselves and improve their and their families' quality of life. Currently, there is little that I, as an individual chief constable, can do in that respect. The committee might want to consider that issue.

The Convener: There being no further questions, I thank you for your attendance this morning. However, before you go, I note that, unless there is one of the unforeseen emergencies

that we talked about earlier, this will be your last appearance before the Justice Committee prior to your departing to your new role in the UK Border Agency. The committee would like to thank you for the considerable contribution that you have made to Scottish policing over the years, for the way in which you have made yourself available to give evidence on a number of occasions and for the facility that you granted the committee on our recent visit to Dundee. Thank you very much indeed for all that you have done.

Chief Constable Vine: Thank you, convener.

The Convener: We will pause briefly before moving on to the next item.

Budget Process 2009-10 (Adviser)

13:26

The Convener: The publication of the Scottish Government's draft budget for 2009-10 is expected in September. Members will recall that last year's draft budget was not published until November, because the UK spending review was not published until October. This year, it is hoped that subject committees will be able to take evidence during September and October, and consider their reports in early November. The committee is asked whether it wishes to seek Parliamentary Bureau approval to appoint an adviser. My recommendation is that we appoint an adviser. Is that agreed?

Members *indicated agreement*.

The Convener: That being the final item, I formally close the meeting, thanking members for their attendance.

Meeting closed at 13:27.

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice at the Document Supply Centre.

No proofs of the *Official Report* can be supplied. Members who want to suggest corrections for the archive edition should mark them clearly in the daily edition, and send it to the Official Report, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP. Suggested corrections in any other form cannot be accepted.

The deadline for corrections to this edition is:

Wednesday 11 June 2008

PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES

OFFICIAL REPORT daily editions

Single copies: £5.00
Meetings of the Parliament annual subscriptions: £350.00

The archive edition of the *Official Report* of meetings of the Parliament, written answers and public meetings of committees will be published on CD-ROM.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS weekly compilation

Single copies: £3.75
Annual subscriptions: £150.00

Standing orders will be accepted at Document Supply.

Published in Edinburgh by RR Donnelley and available from:

Blackwell's Bookshop

53 South Bridge
Edinburgh EH1 1YS
0131 622 8222

Blackwell's Bookshops:
243-244 High Holborn
London WC1 7DZ
Tel 020 7831 9501

All trade orders for Scottish Parliament documents should be placed through Blackwell's Edinburgh.

Blackwell's Scottish Parliament Documentation Helpline may be able to assist with additional information on publications of or about the Scottish Parliament, their availability and cost:

Telephone orders and inquiries
0131 622 8283 or
0131 622 8258

Fax orders
0131 557 8149

E-mail orders
business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

Subscriptions & Standing Orders
business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

Scottish Parliament

RNID Typetalk calls welcome on
18001 0131 348 5000
Textphone 0845 270 0152

sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

All documents are available on the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk

Accredited Agents
(see Yellow Pages)

and through good booksellers

Printed in Scotland by RR Donnelley