LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Wednesday 20 May 2009

Session 3

£5.00

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE
15th Meeting 2009, Session 3

CONVENER

*Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP)
*Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
*David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
*Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab)
*Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD)
*John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD)
Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

David Burke (Perth and Kinross Community Planning Partnership)
Raymond Burns (Glasgow Community Planning Partnership)
Michael Devenney (Moray Community Planning Partnership)
Kirsten Gooday (Community Care Providers Scotland)
Peter McColl (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations)
Jane Thomson (Glasgow Community Planning Partnership)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Susan Duffy

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

David McLaren

ASSISTANT CLERK

Ian Cowan

LOCATION

Committee Room 6

Scottish Parliament

Local Government and Communities Committee

Wednesday 20 May 2009

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:00*]

Decisions on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Duncan McNeil): Good morning and welcome to the 15th meeting in 2009 of the Local Government and Communities Committee. As usual, I ask members and the public to turn off all mobile phones and BlackBerrys.

Do members agree to take item 3, which is consideration of our approach to an inquiry into local government finance, in private?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Do members also agree to consider in private at future meetings our draft report on equal pay in local government?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Single Outcome Agreements

10:01

The Convener: We move to agenda item 2. I warmly welcome our first panel of witnesses, who come from the voluntary sector. Kirsten Gooday is policy and development manager at Community Care Providers Scotland and Peter McColl is policy officer at the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations. I invite the witnesses to make brief introductory remarks.

Kirsten Gooday (Community Care Providers Scotland): The committee has our written submission, which sets out the evidence that we have to present this morning. However, I preface my remarks by saying that we are a national umbrella organisation for voluntary organisations and our members are also largely national organisations. The comments that I will make sit within that context. Smaller, more community-based organisations might well have different experiences of the process.

Peter McColl (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations): I echo Kirsten Gooday's comment. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations is also a national organisation. We try to collect information from our member organisations, but it might be worth while for the committee to take evidence on single outcome agreements and community planning partnerships from an organisation that works at local level. That would give you some idea how single outcome agreements work in practice at the coalface, as it were.

The Convener: We note those comments and move to questions from members of the committee.

Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP): To what extent have your organisations been involved in developing the second round of single outcome agreements?

Kirsten Gooday: Community Care Providers Scotland as an organisation—I am not talking about our members—has not been involved in the second round of single outcome agreements. That is largely a capacity issue. It took us until December to understand what the first set of agreements was about, and by that stage it was too late proactively to influence the second set.

The evidence that we have of our members' involvement is largely anecdotal. My overall impression is that our members have spent time engaging with the first set of single outcome agreements and trying to understand how their work in local authority areas fits in with them,

rather than making proactive efforts to influence the second set.

Alasdair Allan: Is that because the system is new, or is there a capacity issue?

Kirsten Gooday: It is difficult to say. The fact that the system is new makes things difficult. I have the impression that many organisations feel they are running to keep up. Because of the timing—when the reports were produced and when they became available—we spent much of the year trying to understand the first set of agreements. We do not have the additional capacity to seek to influence the second set.

John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I am interested in the make-up of the community planning partnerships. I heard your comments that CCPS and the SCVO are membership organisations. What evidence do you have that the organisations that you represent have influenced the single outcome agreements? What role do they play, if any, in doing that? Do any of your members sit on community planning partnerships?

I have noticed that the community planning partnerships have different make-ups in different parts of Scotland. What issues exist with getting the voluntary sector involved in CPPs other than at the periphery? Is there evidence that local authorities or CPPs are bringing voluntary sector organisations to the core of the process?

Peter McColl: Community planning partnerships are all different. Some have voluntary sector representation at their heart. For example, I highlight West Lothian in my written submission, and Edinburgh certainly made a good job of involving the voluntary sector in drawing up the second set of single outcome agreements. In some other local authority areas, however, engagement is poor. In such areas, the voluntary sector is not represented at the top table in the community planning partnership and there is only sporadic involvement at the lower levels.

Even where the voluntary sector is involved at the heart of the process, there is always an asymmetry of resource. Local authorities have a big administrative capacity, as do health boards and other members of community planning partnerships, and they are much more capable than the voluntary sector is of taking on the strategic work that single outcome agreements require. It should be understood that the voluntary sector cannot participate in that way unless it is fully resourced to do so. That is another challenge for future rounds of single outcome agreements.

Kirsten Gooday: In the first round, the fact that someone was involved with community planning did not mean that they were automatically involved in single outcome agreements. Some 45 per cent of our members stated that they had a route into

community planning, but a similar percentage were not involved in putting together the first set of single outcome agreements. We hope that things have changed on the ground in the production of the second set, but I have no evidence of that.

It might interest the committee to know that the Scottish Government intends to commission research into the third sector's role in community planning and its engagement with community planning partnerships. We in the voluntary sector have encouraged the Government to do that. I contacted it this week and it expects to commission that research shortly. Fieldwork will begin in the autumn and the report will be published next summer.

The Convener: That is interesting. You have commented in your written evidence and this morning that, in general, your members were not involved in developing the first set of single outcome agreements, that there is a capacity issue, that it is too late to influence the second set, and that some research will be done. To put that in context, CCPS members support 160,000 people and families and attract an annual income of £1.1 billion, about 70 per cent of which relates to publicly funded services, yet they have been excluded from the process. Only now are we to have a study of how best the voluntary sector can be involved. That is incredible.

Kirsten Gooday: It might not be true of voluntary sector providers in general, but the fact that my members provide services under contract to local authorities adds an extra dimension to their involvement in local strategic planning. Some of them have discovered that that makes their involvement more difficult. It is often said that providers have a conflict of interest if they become involved at the strategic planning stage and push for an agenda that includes services that they provide, but that is not the case. Consideration needs to be given to separating the planning process and the purchasing process. If they are connected, that will always be an issue.

As national organisations, some of our members are active in all 32 local authority areas. That is where the capacity issue really kicks in, because large-scale providers have to find ways in which to engage with several different community planning partnerships. That is a real issue for many of them.

The Convener: Why does the voluntary sector have any more of a vested interest than, for instance, the police, who are inevitably on community planning partnerships? They are successful in meeting the community planning targets and, from that, getting additional resources to police in difficult communities. What is the difference between you—the voluntary sector—the

police and any other community planning partners?

Peter McColl: You make a fair point. There are real questions about parity of treatment for the different partners at the community planning table. In many ways, the treatment of the voluntary sector proceeds on the assumption that we are there in our own self-interest but other partners are there in the broader interest. However, as you point out, other partners are self-interested to the same extent as the voluntary sector partners and we need to be aware of that. It is extremely important for the SCVO and CCPS that the voluntary sector be involved in strategic planning and not be seen as being in community planning partnerships to promote its own interests.

The Convener: The SCVO submission says:

"The joint planning of services between these stakeholders is an eminently sensible development and can only improve the delivery of services at a local level."

Where is the evidence for that statement?

Peter McColl: It is obvious from examining what has happened as a result of community planning. There is a wide range of anecdotal evidence of joined-up thinking between health boards and police to deal with particular problems, and that suggests that having local providers of public services sit around one table to consider how they should plan those services is a good thing. That comment in our submission relates particularly to community planning and less to single outcome agreements. There is no disagreement that community planning is a good thing.

The Convener: No, but you say that it

"can only improve the delivery of services at a local level."

We have papers from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and others that provide scant evidence for that. The outcomes are not mentioned much at all in them, and I presume that that is because there is no evidence.

Peter McColl: There is a range of anecdotal evidence.

The Convener: That comes with the health warning that you gave us at the start. It is anecdotal; at this point, there is no evidence that the outcomes have improved.

Peter McColl: There is nothing other than anecdotal evidence.

Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): I am interested in the point that you make about the inconsistency of involvement and the fact that resources are spread quite thinly for playing a full part. How do we make best use of the resources that are available to ensure that your voice is heard? I seek some information about the role of the SCVO and CCPS as the umbrella

organisations in supporting the local organisations in getting involved. Will you say a little bit about how you do that—or whether you do that?

Peter McColl: We have two broad areas of work on that, one of which is capacity building. To explain and answer an earlier question, the outcomes approach that we have moved to has entailed a definite paradigm shift. We have changed from one way of looking at the world to another, which is difficult for people who are not at the heart of strategic planning. For organisations such as ours, which are mostly involved in service delivery, the process has been quite difficult. We have had to engage in a lot of capacity building to help people to understand how the new system is intended to work and how we can make it work, and to provide opportunities within the sector to discuss how processes work well and how they work badly.

We are undertaking work with the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers to try to produce examples of good practice that community planning partnerships and those who create single outcome agreements can use in promoting the involvement of the voluntary sector.

Everyone accepts that the first set of single outcome agreements was done in a rush, which meant that many partners—often including the voluntary sector—were left out. We are concerned that the second iteration of single outcome agreements has also been created in a way that excludes the voluntary sector. However, there has been much more inclusion of the sector in this round than there was in the previous round. We hope that there will be more and more involvement as time goes on. It is about building capacity in the sector and ensuring that the people who are involved in community planning are open to that eventuality.

10:15

Kirsten Gooday: Your question is also practical. There are some fairly practical things that must be done. We need to acknowledge that many of those things have to be done by us in the voluntary sector—we are not pointing the finger at community planning and saying, "You do not make any room for us." There are things that we must do to get our house in order. This year CCPS has done a great deal simply to help members to understand the process, as it is new and people have difficulty getting their heads round it. I spent several weeks of the summer just trying to understand it—that was all that I did, but even then I found it quite tricky. On a practical level, we have been amassing information about community planning partnerships in different local areas. Through the year, we have concentrated on

identifying which people sit on which groups, who would be good people to contact and where organisations may be able to find a route in.

The other job that the voluntary sector needs to do is to make best use of the systems that are already there—there is no point in our trying to set things up from scratch. The local voluntary sector infrastructure—for example, councils of voluntary service—is being examined. In many areas, community planning finds it easiest to engage with the voluntary sector through such bodies. Other parts of the sector, such as national organisations, may bristle at that and think that councils of voluntary service are not the best bodies to represent them. We need to do some work internally to ensure that national organisations feel more comfortable with that arrangement and that local infrastructure bodies take on board those organisations' needs. Work is being done on the issue, and we are making inroads where we can.

Mary Mulligan: Your comments are helpful, as they show that people appreciate that there is a new system and that they need to find new ways of approaching it. The one concern that I still have is that it sounds to me as though you will always be one stage behind. At what point will you catch up?

Kirsten Gooday: The concern is that, if processes become embedded without the voluntary sector being part of them—if community planning partnerships think that they can get on all right without the voluntary sector being involved— it will be much more difficult for us to become involved once we have got our house properly in order.

Mary Mulligan: If a local authority is constructing a single outcome agreement that clearly lacks the involvement of the voluntary sector, what should we think about that?

Kirsten Gooday: I was encouraged to see that the information that has been sent to local authorities on how they should report on their processes for single outcome agreements called on them to relate how they have involved partners, including the voluntary sector. It is encouraging that someone, somewhere, has realised that we should be round the table and that we have something important to contribute. Even the fact that the committee sought to take evidence from us today is encouraging. I am not entirely sure what you should do with the information, if we are not involved.

Mary Mulligan: I like your optimism and hope that it will be proved right.

The Convener: You indicated that your role is to have an overview of the process, rather than to be involved in the detail of it. You expressed concern about social care not getting the place that it needs in single outcome agreements. From your position, how are you able to reach the view that the situation has improved, when local government finance is less transparent as a result of the single outcome agreement process?

How do you evaluate the situation? How do you measure what has been achieved so that you can reach the view that the outcomes-based approach that you support is delivering, when it is difficult to see where finance is going and where the priorities are? How do you work in an environment in which we cannot measure or monitor outcomes? When you have less information and involvement than in the past, how do you still conclude that that approach is a good idea for you and the organisations that you represent?

Peter McColl: You make a good point in that a serious disjuncture exists between the national indicators that are set out in the concordat and the indicators that appear in the single outcome agreements. That means that the measurement of indicators through the Scottish Government's Scotland performs framework is not being replicated locally in all instances. Many of the 45 national indicators appear in only a few single outcome agreements, which makes measurement difficult.

A serious issue is the replication of the national indicators in single outcome agreements and how they are measured nationally and locally. I am quite concerned that we will find it difficult to determine what has happened as a result of the move to an outcomes-based approach, because of the mixed methods of assessment, measurement and evaluation of the process. The committee might be interested in that in the future.

Kirsten Gooday: CCPS is still waiting to see whether the outcomes approach is right. It was perhaps the SCVO's approach that included a great endorsement of the outcomes approach. I do not want to say that the outcomes approach is not right but, equally, I do not want to say that it is, because it is still early days for the system.

Our main concern in relation to the system is about monitoring performance on the ground. We are a national organisation that is interested in social care provision throughout the country, but we have almost no idea how we will know how things are going in different areas. We are concerned that local authorities will report against outcomes and indicators that they chose themselves. Some issues are missing from some single outcome agreements. For example, 13 single outcome agreements do not refer to learning disability. That is an issue if the primary way of reporting on local progress and local service delivery is through a single outcome agreement.

I fully accept that not everything that local authorities and all their partners do can be represented in a single outcome agreement. It was difficult enough to read through the first set of single outcome agreements, never mind volumes of agreements that cover everything. However, if single outcome agreements set out local priorities, it is not illogical to assume that what those agreements do not mention is not a local priority, which might have an impact on how budgets are set. We are concerned about that.

It is difficult to make links between what appears in a single outcome agreement and how a budget is set. That is partly because the processes take place at different times in the year and because budgets are still input based, whereas performance measurement will be outcomes based. I am not sure how those two processes are put together.

I add the caveat to all that I have said that it is still early days—perhaps that will all work itself out and be all right. However, the convener raises an important point. For us as a national organisation—and, I suppose, for the committee—knowing how to monitor what happens locally will be difficult.

The then Minister for Public Health said that social care would be covered by an indicator in the single outcome agreements, but several of the agreements did not use that indicator, which was a problem in itself. Even when an indicator is used consistently or reasonably well across the board, it is still difficult to compare performance between local authority areas, because authorities want to measure performance in different ways. For example, in half the councils that use the indicator on reported levels of domestic abuse, Scottish Women's Aid has said that it wants the reported level to rise, because it would be good if people felt more comfortable about reporting domestic abuse, whereas in the other half of councils, the target is for the level to reduce. That is a challenge.

David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con): My question is on the mismatch between national and local indicators. I understand that the 45 national indicators are a feature of the historic concordat. Is that the case?

Peter McColl: Yes.

David McLetchie: Right. The concordat was agreed by the Government and COSLA, on behalf of the local authorities. In devising the document, I assume that both parties to the agreement thought that the 45 indicators were reasonable indicators of whether Scotland is achieving progress on the desired outcomes that were agreed between the two partners as national outcomes. Is that a reasonable summation?

Peter McColl: Yes.

David McLetchie: Right. Now that we have reached stage 2, however, most of the member organisations that are represented by one of those partners—which thought that the 45 indicators were reasonable, and which signed the agreement on behalf of its members—are, in large part, ignoring the document. They have made individual agreements with the Government, which the Government has approved. That has ensured that there is no significant alignment between the national and local indicators. How have we arrived at that situation?

Peter McColl: You would need to ask the partners to the agreement. We were not party to it.

David McLetchie: But is that state of affairs desirable or undesirable?

Peter McColl: The indicators in the concordat are not in themselves a tremendously satisfactory list. For instance, there is no mention of services for older people. I understand why a council might want to deviate from what was agreed in order to encompass a fuller range of services and provisions. However, what appears to be happening is that a totally different set of indicators is being used locally. That is unsatisfactory.

David McLetchie: If there is no alignment, how will progress on the national indicators be measured? How can that be done if local authorities are not committed to the national outcomes, albeit that they nominally are? How can progress be measured at local authority level in order to input the progress that has been made at national level? I do not understand how that can be done. Perhaps you can enlighten us.

Peter McColl: That is exactly the concern that I am trying to articulate. I do not have an answer.

David McLetchie: So, the concordat is inadequate in integrating local and national indicators because of a lack of alignment. Is that what you are saying?

Peter McColl: It is not necessarily the case that the concordat is inadequate. There is a disjuncture between what is in the concordat and what is happening in practice in the creation of the single outcome agreements.

David McLetchie: Yes, but one major partner in the concordat was the representative of all the local authorities that are supposed to deliver the single outcome agreements. It is not as if COSLA is detached from its member organisations, albeit that some would say that.

Peter McColl: That line of questioning should be directed at the partners in the concordat.

David McLetchie: I will definitely do that—do not worry. We are interested in your observations on the subject, but I look forward with relish to their answers.

Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD): I was interested to hear Ms Gooday's assessment of Scottish Government research on the community planning partnerships. I am interested in your organisation's view of the role that the Scottish Government is playing in the process and on what it could do better. I am also interested in the role that this committee plays. Obviously, we play a key role in scrutinising all sorts of service activities and delivery. What do you see as the role of the Local Government and Communities Committee in relation to the CPPs?

10:30

Kirsten Gooday: Both CCPS and the SCVO take part in a work stream on partnership working, which sits underneath a task force that was established by the Scottish Government, the SCVO, COSLA and SOLACE. The work stream has been set up to look at the way in which local government, in particular, and community planning engage with the voluntary sector. A number of pieces of work are under way in that area, which is encouraging. The Scottish Government has recognised that there are issues related both to local infrastructure and to how the wider voluntary sector becomes involved with that. I am encouraged by the work that the Government is doing.

Jim Tolson: You say that you are encouraged by that work, but do you think that it is adequate, given that organisations such as CCPS and its member organisations were not directly involved in formulating single outcome agreements on the services that they will help to provide at the end of the day?

Kirsten Gooday: I would not like to apportion blame to anyone for that situation. I would not apportion it to the Scottish Government any more than I would apportion it to the voluntary sector. The system was new, and it was difficult for people to understand what would happen. Single outcome agreements were created quickly by local authorities or by authorities and some of their community planning partners.

There is a key structural issue that may need to be addressed through guidance to community planners. The voluntary sector is not an add-on, but it is not a statutory partner—there is no obligation for it to be represented around the table. Community planners are obliged to engage with the police, who were mentioned previously, and with health; they may think that it would be nice to engage with the voluntary sector, but they are not obliged to do so. It is difficult for community planning managers to get everyone who has to be there around the table to agree to things, so I understand why they might decide not to bring anyone else on board. Structurally, it would be a way forward if we became a partner that had to be around the table and treated in the same manner as other community planning partners.

Peter McColl: There has been a good deal more input from the Scottish Government into the second iteration of single outcome agreements to turn them into high-level, strategic documents, which will be backed by operational plans of some sort. In the first iteration, single outcome agreements could be plans in and of themselves, but they are now high-level, strategic documents, backed by a single operational plan or a series of such plans. We are concerned that, although the voluntary sector may be involved in the creation of the single outcome agreement—the strategic, high-level document—it may not be involved in the creation of the operational plans that determine how the agreement is delivered. It might be worth while for the committee to examine not just how the voluntary sector is involved in determining the high-level strategy, but the extent to which its involvement drills down beneath the level of single outcome agreements into operational plans, which determine how things happen.

Jim Tolson: Should the targets that are set be discussed more openly among all partners and scrutinised by the committee and others, to ensure that they are met within a reasonable timescale and on a reasonable financial basis?

Peter McColl: Yes, that would be worth while.

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): What I have to say follows on from the comments of Mr Tolson and Ms Gooday. I was planning to ask whether you had experience of how ready community planning partners have been to engage with the voluntary sector in all 32 local authorities. Sometimes discussion of single outcome agreements and concordats is quite woolly—we go around in circles and do not get to the bottom of the issue. I would have liked you to provide us with a case study of a local authority that excels in engaging with the voluntary sector and of one that—to use positive language—has challenges ahead of it and needs to up its game; that would have allowed the committee to contrast the two. I will not ask you to name a local authority that needs to raise its game, as that would be unfair, but can you provide us with an example of an authority that is good at engaging with the voluntary sector?

Peter McColl: The example that is usually cited is West Lothian Council. The committee might wish to take evidence from the partners who are involved in the process there. I am reluctant to talk

about areas where such engagement is done badly, but I am sure that we could find an example of partners who would wish to give evidence in that direction.

Bob Doris: So far, we have heard that one local authority out of 32 is good at engaging with the voluntary sector. Is there any advance on that?

Peter McColl: The City of Edinburgh Council has done a pretty good job in the second iteration.

Bob Doris: I am not being churlish. I ask the question because of what Kirsten Gooday said in response to an earlier question from Mr Tolson. She said that it is desirable for the voluntary sector's engagement with community planning partnerships and local authorities to be put on a statutory footing. Do you also think that that would be advantageous?

Peter McColl: Yes. That would be welcome.

Bob Doris: Thank you. I just wanted to ensure that we had that on the record, because we might want to explore the matter further.

We also heard about local indicators and what is and is not on the list. Is it the voluntary sector's view that, as soon as something does not appear on a list, it is no longer a priority for local government? For example, if dealing with the incidence of domestic violence is not on the list, is it perceived to be no longer a priority for the local authority?

Peter McColl: Some voluntary organisations see things in that way, but we do not. Local authorities that omit an indicator on domestic violence do not do so because they are not concerned about domestic violence. There are questions about how local authorities and community planning partnerships communicate their priorities and the areas to which they will direct their attention. Parts of the sector will pick up a negative message if certain things are left out, but that is not to say that local authorities do not care about or are not interested in those areas.

Bob Doris: I wonder how extensive the list would need to be. If I was in a certain organisation that was involved in one way or another and the relevant indicator did not appear on the list, I would be quite upset. I wonder whether there is a danger that any list that is created will be seen as exclusive rather than inclusive. Do you want to comment further on that?

Peter McColl: That is an interesting question about outcomes-based approaches. The approach of local area agreements that was chosen in England is such that they have a list of more than 300 indicators, and I am not even sure that that list is comprehensive. In an outcomes-based approach, the chosen outcomes should be proxies that reflect broader elements and not just those

that are contained in the indicator. The problem with the concordat and many of the local indicators is that the indicators are very specific. They do not act as broader proxies.

Kirsten Gooday: It is human nature that organisations that work in particular fields want those fields to be represented as well as possible. That is the reason for the knee-jerk reaction from parts of the voluntary sector, but also from other parts of society, when the field that they are interested in is not there. When the 45 national indicators were published, we had grave concerns that social care was not adequately covered. Social care is what we are paid to do, so no one would expect me to say anything other than that we would have liked to see more coverage of it.

Our view varied slightly when we looked at the content of the single outcome agreements and it became apparent that it was up to local authorities whether they used the 45 national indicators. If I represented an organisation that was in favour of the proxy measure on ground-breeding birds or whatever it was, which seemed a bit left field when the indicators came out, I would have been pleased to see it on the list of national indicators but disappointed to discover that only three local authorities used it. Any reaction to what is on the list of national indicators will be tempered by the fact that local authorities can decide whether to use them.

We are concerned about local outcomes and indicators not because we imagine that services that are not mentioned in single outcome agreements, such as services for people with learning disabilities, will not be provided full stop, but because authorities could get away with providing a statutory minimum of service. We have wider aspirations for service development, personalisation and the way in which people who receive services are treated. If budgets are aligned with local priorities, as set out in single outcome agreements, there is a danger that services will be eroded. We do not imagine that nothing will happen, but we worry that, if services are not a priority, other areas will get the money.

Bob Doris: I have asked quite a lot of questions; my last one will be brief. You suggested that what is and is not included on the list of local indicators and outcomes may be significant, because it may have budgetary consequences. We will raise the issue with local authorities when we take evidence from them, but do you have any evidence of how budgets have been affected by what is included on the list at local level? Have you noticed a cause-and-effect relationship?

Kirsten Gooday: We desperately need a piece of work to be done on the issue. CCPS does not have the capacity to do it, and the timescales also make it difficult to do. The budgets for last year

were set before the single outcome agreements were agreed between local authorities and the Scottish Government, so it is reasonable to assume that they may have been influenced, but probably not directly. The question is whether this year's budgets have been affected by the first iteration of single outcome agreements or by the second, which is about to go in. A massive piece of work is desperately needed to look at all those issues in the round, but I am not aware of anyone having done it.

The Convener: The next time that we get an e-mail from you on an important issue, we will bear in mind your candid view that you may not really mean what you say and that you are just going through the motions; I am sure that you did not want to leave that impression.

You said that we would expect you to complain about the 45 national indicators, but is the fact that social care does not feature highly in any of the single outcome agreements linked to the absence of any national indicator for social care? There is a link between being on the list and getting recognition, and the ability to monitor, measure and finance outcomes, to ensure accountability and progress. If an outcome is not on the national or local lists, how can it be pursued? How can you measure whether authorities are meeting the minimum standard or making progress, and whether finance is being directed towards that end?

Kirsten Gooday: Our analysis showed that national outcomes were more likely to be referenced. More national outcomes relate or can be tied to children's services. Our analysis showed that such outcomes were more likely to be included in single outcome agreements.

The Improvement Service's menu of local indicators, which was sent to local authorities, included an indicator that related to social care. I understand that, at the time, even ministers hoped that social care would be encompassed in single outcome agreements in that way, but use of the indicator was patchy. Some local authorities used it as an outcome, but others used it as an indicator; some measured it in one way, whereas others measured it in another. The indicator was available for them to use, if they wished, but they chose to use it in a way that made it very difficult to measure progress across the country.

10:45

The indicator refers to encouraging people who require social care services to live more independently. It was included by four local authorities, but with supporting indicators that referred only to older people. My question about reporting and monitoring is this: can someone say that they have achieved the positive outcome of people who use social care living more independently if the indicators that they use to monitor that count only older people? Such a measure is important, but it does not encompass other people who need assistance to live more independently, such as people with learning disabilities or mental health problems.

The Convener: Being identified on the list of indicators can make a difference. It is not insignificant for the people concerned if they are not mentioned in the national indicators or in a local authority's single outcome agreement. I might have misunderstood you, but I heard you say, "Well, they would be concerned, wouldn't they?" It is important, is it not, to be recognised? It can have an effect on the particular area of work if people are not mentioned nationally or locally.

Kirsten Gooday: It is important to be recognised, but it is equally important—

The Convener: Is it significant or not? Does it matter?

Kirsten Gooday: It does matter. It—

The Convener: Thank you.

Kirsten Gooday: It is significant, but you must also appreciate that, if you wanted to put together a list of indicators that pleased everybody in the country so that everybody felt that their issue was covered, the list would be so long that it would be unmanageable. That would create different issues.

The Convener: What would be the problem with a long list? Why is a shorter list up here in Scotland a better system than what happens down south, where there are lists of 300?

Kirsten Gooday: I do not know that either is a better system. Nobody is going to be entirely satisfied with—

The Convener: Have you any evidence to substantiate your answer? Have you looked into that?

Kirsten Gooday: Not in great detail, no.

The Convener: Okay. I think that we will move on.

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab): I understand, and ministers have made it clear in answers to questions that other members have posed, that not everything will be in single outcome agreements and that there are other mechanisms whereby organisations can get themselves a place in the system and/or funding. However, if SOAs are all about measuring outcomes, how do we measure the outcomes in areas that are not obviously part of an SOA? How do we know that we have the correct outcomes in such areas?

Peter McColl: That is a good question. The answer lies in the choice of indicators. As I said earlier, the indicators should be appropriate proxies that give us a range of information beyond that which is contained in the indicator. For example, a common indicator for child deprivation is the number of free school meals. Measuring that tells us only how many children get free school meals, but we can use that as an effective proxy for the number of children who live in multiple deprivation.

We need a piece of work that gives us a set of indicators that effectively deliver more analytical information than merely what is reflected in the statistics, if that makes sense. Our dissatisfaction is with a set of indicators that are partial or overspecific. Kirsten Gooday gave the example of terrestrial nesting birds. Such indicators do not give us the added information that would allow measurement of broader progress.

It would be possible to create such a list. I understand that, in New Zealand, which takes an outcomes-based approach, people spent a long time thinking about what the indicators should be. That is what we are asking for. We want indicators that are much more effective in their measurement of progress and outcomes.

Patricia Ferguson: You seek a less blunt and more sophisticated approach.

Peter McColl: Yes.

Patricia Ferguson: Are you actively in dialogue about that with local government or the Scottish Government?

Peter McColl: We are engaged in a series of processes where we are trying to make that clear.

Patricia Ferguson: Do not let me put words into your mouth, but I presume from what you have just said that it would be helpful to the voluntary sector generally if the committee were to say that we thought that the issue should be looked at before we go too much further down this road.

Peter McColl: That would be helpful to everyone who is involved in single outcome agreements and community planning.

Kirsten Gooday: Not everything can be included in single outcome agreements, but we hope that in the second and subsequent sets of agreements there will be a clear line of sight from what are listed in agreements as overall strategic objectives to the operational plans that sit below them. We were concerned that the first set of single outcome agreements did not link the outcomes that were expressed in the documents with the services that are provided on the ground and which need to be provided to deliver those outcomes. I understand that guidance that has been issued to community planning partnerships indicates that a golden thread should run from single outcome agreements down to other plans. As an organisation that is seeking to decipher how local authorities and their partners think that single outcome agreements and operational plans should be linked, we would find that approach incredibly helpful.

Patricia Ferguson: That is helpful.

David McLetchie: I want to touch on the fundamental issue of who represents the voluntary sector. I am sure that the SCVO and CCPS have grappled with the issue many times, but it is relevant to today's discussion. We have discussed high-level and low-level engagement, strategic involvement and so on. It has been suggested that the involvement of the voluntary sector in SOAs, community planning partnerships and so on be put on a statutory basis. Given the range of organisations that are involved, and the disparity between them, how can that realistically be achieved? For example, who would decide which voluntary sector organisations should sit on the community planning partnership for a council area such as Edinburgh? How would we ensure that such organisations were representative of all the voluntary organisations that work in the city?

Peter McColl: At the moment, the Scottish Government is engaged in a piece of work to create a set of what it calls voluntary sector interfaces, which would bring together local infrastructure such as councils for voluntary service, volunteer centres, local social economy networks and local social economy partnerships to provide a single point of contact for community planning partnerships. We are keen to ensure that the process reaches a satisfactory outcome. Edinburgh is a good example of an area in which organisations have been able to come to an arrangement with which they are happy. The Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council will be included in the community planning partnership. A set of protocols for consultation and engagement with other organisations and the partner bodies of local infrastructure organisations has been agreed.

David McLetchie: Essentially—I hope that I am not putting words in your mouth—you are saying that we need to create a representative umbrella organisation, or to use one that already exists. The umbrella organisation must then mediate in some way between the various voluntary organisations that may be active in the local authority area. Is that broadly correct?

Peter McColl: Yes.

David McLetchie: I have another general question. Is there broad agreement in the sector that the structure that you have described is appropriate? Do your member organisations accept that?

Peter McColl: There are some practical difficulties, but there is broad acceptance of the approach.

David McLetchie: Therefore you would not include an organisation that represented a particular sectoral interest, such as Kirsten Gooday's organisation. CCPS's many member organisations are involved in community care and are important in service delivery on the ground, whether we are talking about national or local indicators. Is it appropriate for CCPS to be represented throughout Scotland's community planning partnerships, or is the correct approach to say, "No, CCPS's members are service delivery organisations; we want voluntary sector representative organisations that go beyond service delivery to sit on our CPPs"?

Kirsten Gooday: It is about ensuring that the right people are at the right table at the right time.

David McLetchie: Yes, but who are the right people? Is it your member organisations in each council area, or is it a person or body that represents the entire voluntary sector in the area?

Kirsten Gooday: It depends which table we are talking about. There is a difference between how the voluntary sector would be represented at a strategic level in the CPP and how it would be involved in the production of the operational plans that sit below the single outcome agreement. It is about horses for courses.

For example, for the integrated children's services plan, which is an extremely important part of local authority strategic planning, we would want children's services organisations to be represented in some form. "Representation" is a bit of a misnomer in the context of the voluntary sector: a voluntary sector member might be present, but we could not aspire to a system in which a single person somehow represented every voluntary organisation.

David McLetchie: You are talking about the level below the CPP.

Kirsten Gooday: Yes.

David McLetchie: Therefore, organisations such as CCPS should not be on CPPs but should be represented at lower tiers, which are concerned with the delivery of services locally, whereas local umbrella organisations of the sort that Mr McColl described should be represented on CPPs. Is that correct? Is that model generally accepted in the third sector as being the appropriate approach to engagement at the different levels?

Kirsten Gooday: I cannot speak for the rest of the sector, but that is certainly where our interest lies. In any case, CCPS is a national organisation and does not have the capacity to be involved at every level. If we are talking about choosing our

battles, I think that many of our members would mainly want to be involved at the level of their specialist area of interest, rather than at a higher, strategic level.

David McLetchie: Does Mr McColl agree with that?

Peter McColl: The general indications that we have had from area-specific, thematic organisations are that such organisations have little interest in being on community planning partnerships, although they have an interest in being involved in particular areas of their work. As Kirsten Gooday said, CCPS's member organisations would not necessarily be interested in sitting on the CPP but might well be interested in sitting on the bits that create operational plans for particular areas of delivery.

David McLetchie: Let us move up a level to the strategic level, where there is a body that represents the wider voluntary sector—in reality, one or two people would be assigned to that task. In formulating the community plan and, through that, the local authority's single outcome agreement, how can one or two people determine the priorities, given that they represent many different organisations that are battling away for their interests? Who decides whose view is represented and what the appropriate balance is, in the context of the use of public resources and effort in a given area?

Peter McColl: The Scottish Government's aim in creating voluntary sector interfaces is to have a number of member organisations at local authority level, which would be governed by their members in the way that member organisations are governed. It would be for the internal structures of each organisation to make the decisions and to have them reflected by the individual who sat on the CPP.

David McLetchie: So those local fora are meant to assess among themselves which areas they think are priorities in a particular local authority area and the representative of all the voluntary sector organisations is then meant to reflect that in what he or she says at community planning partnership meetings, which in turn will be reflected in the formulation of the SOAs. Is that right?

Peter McColl: Yes.

11:00

David McLetchie: Is that arrangement working satisfactorily?

Peter McColl: It is what I would call a work in progress. There are areas, such as Edinburgh, where it is working highly satisfactorily. There are other areas where the interface agenda is not at a

level at which that arrangement has been able to work thus far, but as time goes on such interaction should work better. I think that the Scottish Government's intention is to have interfaces in place across Scotland by 2011.

The Convener: Is there any indication that the voluntary sector is working more effectively in areas such as West Lothian or Edinburgh to help that process along, or is it just the local authority that is involved in such work? It seems to me that if voluntary sector organisations were to work together more effectively, that would make it more possible for them to have regular contact and to have the interface that you have described. Is that a factor?

Peter McColl: It tends to be a combination of both.

The Convener: So there needs to be a willingness on the part of the local authority, and the voluntary sector must have the ability to respond to that initiative. Is that right?

Peter McColl: Yes.

The Convener: Right. Thanks.

John Wilson will ask the final question.

John Wilson: It is not the question that I wanted to ask earlier, but it follows on from the points that have been made. How many CPPs does the SCVO have representation on? What is the witnesses' understanding of the number of CPPs that exist in Scotland? We know that we have 32 local authorities, and we know how many health boards and police boards there are, but how many CPPs are there? What is the relationship between the delivery organisations that were mentioned earlier and the CPPs? In my mind, there is a disjunction between the CPPs and the local delivery mechanisms. I invite the panel to comment on those issues.

Peter McColl: The SCVO is not on any community planning partnerships—they are local structures and we are a national organisation, so it would not be appropriate for us to be on them. I prefaced my comments by suggesting that the committee should take evidence from organisations that are directly involved in the community planning process. Many of our members would welcome the opportunity to give you such evidence.

My understanding is that the intention is to have 32 CPPs in Scotland, one for each local authority area. I am not sure that all 32 are up and running, but that is the intention. Many of them have local substructures at ward or sub-city level.

As regards your question about delivery organisations, I am not sure that we have that information at the moment.

John Wilson: Thank you.

The Convener: I thank the witnesses for their time and the evidence that they have given the committee. I suspend the meeting for a few minutes while the witnesses change over.

11:04

Meeting suspended.

11:06

On resuming—

The Convener: I welcome our second panel of witnesses, who are from community planning partnerships. We have David Burke, executive director for housing and community care with Perth and Kinross Council, who is representing Perth and Kinross community planning partnership; Michael Devenney, principal of Moray College, who is representing Moray community planning partnership; and Raymond Burns, corporate policy manager with Glasgow City Council and Jane Thomson, corporate policy officer with the council, both of whom are representing Glasgow community planning partnership.

I hesitate to ask whether the witnesses want to make introductory remarks—I do not know whether you agreed that one of you would do so. Alternatively, we can go straight to questions. If you all wish to make introductory remarks, that is fine, but we must keep them brief, please.

Raymond Burns (Glasgow Community Planning Partnership): I am happy to be here. The range of witnesses on the panel is interesting. We have a director of two very important services in community planning; a representative of a further education college, which is something that we find useful in our community planning process; and a centralist like myself, who sits at the centre of corporate policy.

The Convener: As none of the other witnesses wants to say anything, we will proceed to questions.

John Wilson: Where is the elected member involvement in the process? We see the structures and we have a report from the Improvement Service and senior officers in the Scottish Government, but I am at a loss to understand where the democratically elected members fit in the process and the decision-making structures of community planning partnerships.

David Burke (Perth and Kinross Community Planning Partnership): In Perth and Kinross, the community planning partnership is chaired by the leader of Perth and Kinross Council. We have sub-structures in the community planning partnership,

such as our strategic health partnership and our community safety partnership and several other working groups beneath that. They, too, are chaired by elected members of Perth and Kinross Council. In some working groups, the convenership is shared between the community planning partners throughout Perth and Kinross.

Michael Devenney (Moray Community Planning Partnership): I am not sure whether David Burke implied that elected members are involved only in a chairing capacity. That certainly would have characterised the Moray approach to community planning until the single outcome agreements came along. At that stage, there was a profound change in member involvement, from somewhat marginal involvement, which more often than not was chairing groups, to being in the majority on the board and on the theme groups that support the board's work. Elected member involvement is significant in Moray, which is a consequence of the new arrangements.

Raymond Burns: In Glasgow, we have a central strategic board, which is chaired by the leader of the council, and 10 local community planning partnerships, all of which have at least three or four elected members, depending on the size of the multimember wards in the area. All those groups are also chaired by a local elected member.

John Wilson: My point is that the local authority's democratic accountability is directly through the elected members. I am trying to find out whether elected members, who are held accountable once every four years—it will be five years for a while if the Scottish Local Government (Elections) Bill is passed—make the decisions at the end of the day. Dr Andrew Goudie has provided guidance to us that states:

"The potential of a Chief Officers Group … is important. Driving SOA commitments through partnership, corporate and service planning and improving budgetary alignment and resource allocation is an executive leadership … role."

The accountability is through elected members at the elections, but I want to tease out the role that senior officers have in the community planning process, particularly at local government level.

The make-up of community planning partnerships seems to vary between local authority areas. I am glad that we have a witness who represents a college. Where do the elected members fit, given that fire and rescue boards, police boards, health boards and various Government agencies are involved in community planning partnerships? Where do the elected members sit in that process, apart from chairing groups, as the witnesses have said?

Raymond Burns: In Glasgow's strategic board, we have tended to seek representation from the chairs of those organisations. The chairs of the police and fire committees tend to be elected members. On the accountability of the elected members who serve on those structures, the first place that our near-draft single outcome agreement went was back to Glasgow City Council's executive committee for approval in the first instance, before it was even submitted to the community planning partnership.

John Wilson: My understanding is that not all the elected members sit on Glasgow City Council's executive committee.

Raymond Burns: The Glasgow strategic board sits above the executive group. That group, to which I think you are referring, is an officers group. The strategic board is made up of the leader of the council and the chairs of the various organisations that are involved, who tend to be elected members.

John Wilson: I want to clarify that. You are talking about the health board and organisations that have a directly elected chair. Does a representative of the Department for Work and Pensions sit on the strategic board? Are other organisations represented that do not have elected members as their head?

Raymond Burns: The DWP is not represented on the Glasgow board. Scottish Enterprise is being considered for membership at that level. We have representatives from the health, police and fire boards.

The Convener: Is it recognised that there is an issue? I had private conversations with COSLA representatives last summer about the situation. The community planning partnerships usually have a minority of councillors, although they are probably senior councillors from each of the parties. All the other members of the partnerships are not elected.

I am not suggesting that the system is bad, or that what used to happen was preferable. I understand the flaws in the old system—when money for projects was allocated and distributed, outcomes were perhaps not examined and a strategic approach was not taken. However, we now have a system in which unelected people and a minority of councillors are sitting round a table making decisions bid by bid. There are good arguments for that, and being unelected does not make someone bad, but it raises the issue of accountability.

I am sure that that issue has been raised in local authorities—it has certainly been raised by councillors in local areas. They do not consider themselves to have a particularly good role in the system, but they feel that they have to justify particular decisions out there in the sticks. Is the

issue of a lack of accountability in the new system recognised, and if so, how is it being addressed?

11:15

Michael Devenney: Is it worth distinguishing between accountability through the ballot box and accountability otherwise?

The Convener: Yes—that is the point that has been made.

Michael Devenney: As you may know, the boards of the colleges in Scotland are not elected. We would not view ourselves as being on a frolic of our own, with regard to the need to ensure that what we do is guided somewhat, and we are certainly accountable.

As a community planning partnership in Moray, we regard the single outcome agreement as something that we have all bought into. The individual organisation boards have all been asked to ensure that that happens in the second round of SOAs. We regard ourselves as being accountable to the community at large.

The priorities were arrived at largely by way of a significant piece of work that was undertaken by Craigforth Consulting—which involved around 750 community responses—to sharpen up the prioritisation. Thereafter, of course, it is not enough to ask—it is much more important that we deliver. We recognise that we must do more to ensure that we communicate with the community not only beforehand, but afterwards, as effectively as we can. We have taken steps in that direction that relate to the use of our website and the production of reports. However, I take the point that, with regard to accountability at the ballot box, we are not all putting ourselves up for re-election.

The Convener: Some would say that we are creating within the councils an elite decision-making process through the leadership role of the executive: the senior councillors and the senior officials who are driving the process. Perhaps that is only in the west of Scotland—it might not be apparent in your area. I will let Mr Burke continue.

David Burke: I will try to articulate the issue in relation to my experience of how Perth and Kinross CPP operates. I do not want to give too lengthy an answer or to prevaricate, but my response relates to some of your earlier discussion with the voluntary sector representatives, which I listened to.

The single outcome agreement and the community planning partnership are not the only way in which outcomes are recorded and measured, and in which people are held accountable. We believe that the golden thread that was mentioned exists through the single outcome agreement, our corporate plan and our

service plans. There is a tension for elected members, who work in our thematic committees and approve, debate and discuss the service plans.

As executive director, I put those plans before the elected members and we discuss them in our member-officer working groups. They then hold me accountable on behalf of the electorate in Perth and Kinross. The community planning partnership and the single outcome agreement are about how they exercise that accountability in a partnership function, and how they influence the alignment of other partners' activities and outcomes.

Some years down the road, sharper tensions will begin to develop for the elected member and the delivery of services, as partnerships grow more cohesive and perhaps deal with more decisions. For us, the single outcome agreement is a performance information framework. The community planning partnership is not a legal entity, so governance for finance will still come through our elected committees.

The Convener: Community planning partnerships are using the criteria that are laid down for fairer Scotland fund money; they are working to and delivering on someone else's criteria. Has it not been the case that the councillors are very much involved in the delivery process?

David Burke: Yes, and so are all the partners. The Perth and Kinross Association of Voluntary Service has been a member of our community planning partnership for a considerable number of years, and it has been part of the single outcome agreement from the initial stages. It is a means of communicating with the part of our electorate that we sometimes do not reach through the ballot box. Because the PKAVS has contact with service users, it can tell us how services should be provided and its view of local priorities. One of the benefits of the SOA is our ability to establish local delivery mechanisms for national priorities.

The Convener: We have heard evidence that not all councils have a community planning partnership. Are you aware which of the 32 councils do not have a CPP?

David Burke: No.

Bob Doris: My question relates to John Wilson's comments about accountability. I want to know more about where the responsibility lies for a decision that was taken, although I do not want to get into the rights and wrongs of that decision. Glasgow community planning partnership has moved from project to programme, and has decided to take money from each local community planning partnership back to the centre and give it out for new programmes.

The 10 local community planning partnerships were writing to voluntary sector organisations in Glasgow, and some of them were getting 20 per cent cuts. I think that the rule of thumb was that, if they were funded for just under £100,000, they automatically got a 20 per cent cut in their income. Putting aside the rights and wrongs of that, did the local community planning partnerships have the power to disagree with the community planning partnership at the centre? Could they have said, "We have devolved governance, and we're rejecting that change and holding on to our budget"? What power did they have?

Raymond Burns: There is no formal statutory structure to local community planning partnerships or our city-wide strategic board. However, Glasgow City Council delegates to the strategic board the financial accountability—in essence, the fairer Scotland fund money.

The move to the project to programme approach, and the desire to reconfigure programmes—as I think that we might have called it at the time—by 20 per cent was driven by the central strategic board. I do not think that any of the 10 local community planning partnerships took us to task on that. I am not 100 per cent sure whether they had the power to do that, or how the changes would have been reacted to. However, I am not aware that any of them adopted the position that you suggest or said that they were unwilling to accept the changes. Indeed, as you are aware, while the target that was set was 20 per cent, a number of community planning partnerships went beyond that and tried to free up resources for new activity in their areas.

Bob Doris: Again, I do not want to go into the rights and wrongs of what happened, but would it be possible for you to confirm to the committee whether, under any form of devolved governance, local community planning partnerships would have had the power not to implement the 20 per cent cut?

Raymond Burns: Absolutely. We will get back to you on that.

Bob Doris: Do CPPs basically become an arm of the ruling administration, or do they truly engage all stakeholders? Is it only councillors from the governing party or parties in each local authority who sit on the high-level strategic board?

Raymond Burns: In Glasgow's case, the organisations that are represented by a councillor are represented by elected members from the ruling administration. However, one of the chairs is a voluntary sector representative. Not all representatives are elected members, but those that are elected members are from the ruling administration.

David Burke: It is my understanding that, in Perth and Kinross, the councillors involved are members of the administration. However, I am subject to a crisis of confidence at the minute and am reluctant to commit myself to that statement. I will confirm that and let you know.

Michael Devenney: The elected member representation on the Moray community planning board is all-party. That also applies to the elected member involvement in our five theme groups and our community engagement group.

Bob Doris: That is helpful. I just wanted to dig down to find out where the power lies in the partnerships.

Raymond Burns: On the local community planning board there is mixed representation from across the parties.

Mary Mulligan: I am interested in the point that Bob Doris just made. We have only a selection of local authority representatives with us today. It would be interesting to know what happens in other local authorities.

I do not know whether this was Mr Burke's intention, but his description of how things operate in his local authority with the community planning partners suggested to me that there are parallel systems. Where do the two systems meet? Where would the final decisions be taken and how are they arrived at?

David Burke: In a sense, you are probably correct that there are parallel systems. The council is still subject to delivering the whole range of statutory services and it is accountable for that. The governance arrangements are through our thematic committees.

We have funding that is delegated to the community planning partnership. There is activity around generating the outcomes through the SOA and around seeing where the outcomes of our service plans and corporate plans match up with the SOA and the national outcomes. We work hard to try to ensure that there is no conflict in that. The council's commitment is to ensure that our activities and outcomes fit in with the national outcomes. We have gone through all the national outcomes and looked at where our local outcomes fit in with them and where our local indicators provide evidence of that. That activity is channelled to try to ensure that there is a harmony there.

Mary Mulligan: Is that happening in other local authorities, too?

Raymond Burns: The situation is similar in Glasgow. There are issues around the number of indicators that we have been addressing and around getting buy-in from other partners that have set their own performance management

frameworks. The process has been interesting and useful in focusing in on some of the numbers. We will do more of that in the future.

Mary Mulligan: Do you think that any lessons have been learnt in relation to how you can deliver, through the community planning process, the outcomes that have been set, which might not have happened previously?

David Burke: We all have a number of years of experience of working through the community planning process. Last year, our community planning partnership commissioned a local conference on alcohol, which was particularly successful in that elected members and senior officials from other organisations and agencies in the partnership attended and there was a local focus on the damage that alcohol misuse does in our communities. Our community is sometimes seen as a relatively affluent one that does not have some of the more obvious bits of deprivation that others have, but that is absolutely not the case.

The community planning partnership allowed us to feel a real sense of ownership and accountability for taking local action. Developing that action has become the responsibility of three different parts of our community planning partnership. The partnership holds itself accountable for progress, with officers held accountable for progress in turn. We might not yet be at the stage at which real outcomes can be evidenced, but I think that the inputs, the process and the investment that has been made to identify the issues will deliver the outcomes.

11:30

Michael Devenney: I was interested to look at the interim report that is among the committee's papers for today's meeting. It is a good, fair report, and I could see Moray operating in that context to a considerable extent. As I indicated earlier, there was a seminal nature to the move in Moray last year. With regard to the council's involvement, the community planning partnership board and theme groups had involved officer representation rather than member representation. In building any partnership of the sort that we are talking about today, it is almost unavoidable that a lot of investment has to go into building trust and understanding. We felt that we had made a lot of progress in that direction over an extended period.

Inevitably, when we move personnel to such a great extent, we almost have to go back to the start. It is somewhat unfortunate that we invested a lot of our time last year in policy making, structures, working things out and rearranging the furniture. However, we very much got into our stride at the second time of asking. We have been

helped by the Improvement Service and by the advice that was offered by Liz Hunter from the Scottish Government. We have pretty much taken what has come at us on the chin. It was pointed out to us that we were trying to do too much. We had to put in place a much better evidence base to inform our prioritisation and monitoring.

It is a matter of having a sharper sense of who is actually taking responsibility for the achievement of the various actions that are taken. Things were a bit nebulous previously. We have a partnership, but ultimately we have to look round the table and get one of the partners to assume lead responsibility if we are going to get anywhere.

Raymond Burns: In Glasgow, we have a strong strategic board in the community planning partnership, which is helped by a wide-ranging, senior executive group that has done much of the behind-the-schemes work. One of the issues for us was to link the work of the board with activities in the 10 local areas. Recently, we conducted a customer survey among 10,000 people—1,000 in each of the 10 community planning areas—to find out what the priorities were in each area. Some surprising results came out of that. Funding was offered from the centre to part-fund work to address some of the issues. That helped to build a relationship between the centre and the local areas, and it showed that they were both aligned to the same line of sight.

The Convener: The community planning process has been long in the making. I am not sure whether this was the case in your area, but even getting people round the table and getting the community plan in place was a difficult process. The plan then needs to be fixed and priorities have to be identified. How flexible can you be when the situation and priorities change in the future? We have the economic crunch and increased unemployment, and we might need to build capacity in colleges, for example. Can you make changes quickly, or are you locked into five-year plans? The test of community planning partnerships will be how quickly and effectively they can respond to changing circumstances. Have the partnerships got that capability?

Michael Devenney: I think that we have. The planning boards and groups that surround them provide a ready-made mechanism for getting to grips with the seismic changes that sometimes come upon us.

For example, it is most unlikely that many of last year's single outcome agreements would have referred to the need for the partnership to major on the economic downturn. However, one year on, one would expect all of them to concern themselves with the issue. On the agenda at tomorrow afternoon's meeting of our wealthier and fairer theme group is a paper from Highlands and

Islands Enterprise that will, I guess, invite members to embrace the approach that it is suggesting should be adopted in Moray.

The Convener: And that will change your priorities for next year.

Michael Devenney: Yes.

The Convener: If you are trying to ensure that young people stay on at school and that those who are not at school and cannot get a job go to college instead—which will, of course, require additional capacity in colleges—will your budgets follow that?

Michael Devenney: That is an interesting point. The partnership's budget is actually the budget for running the partnership, which is a small amount, not the budget for delivering on our actions, which is a huge amount.

The Convener: But with your smaller budget and given the previous discussion about accountability, how easy is it to convince elected members to shift budgets in recognition that, for example, there is growing unemployment, youth unemployment and so on? I am interested to hear that Moray is discussing the issue tomorrow. Is the current economic situation changing the priorities for the second phase of SOAs, and are budgets being shifted to achieve certain outcomes?

David Burke: I believe that our partnership has the flexibility to move and change. After all, we have publicly acknowledged that all parts of the public sector can be subject to, for example, radical changes in budgets and that in such circumstances we might need to change our approach.

Should we dramatically alter our priorities? The fact is that certain priorities have grown over a number of years and in different economic situations. We realise that there is still a need, for example, to close the gap for the most disadvantaged in society, to address health inequalities and to ensure that children have the opportunity to achieve the best results they can. I do not think that those core issues for community planning partnerships will ever really change, although, depending on the situation and the need to get better value for money, our approach and ability to do something about them or to invest in services might.

The whole approach to the third sector is interesting, because it is all about finding out what the organisations can bring to the table. People used to think that they could get better value through commissioning and trying to drive down prices and secure cheaper services. I do not think that that holds anymore.

One very valuable aspect of the voluntary sector is its workforce, particularly given that the

workforce in certain areas is ageing. The sector also has the creativity and imagination that does not always exist across the 32 local authorities, and it has a different dialogue with service users and communities. Part of our future lies not in changing priorities but in taking a flexible approach to delivering services—and the third sector has a place in that.

I appreciated the earlier discussion about the third sector's difficulties in being representative. Some service providers are very competitive with one another, and it can be difficult to establish an umbrella organisation—which, I have to say, we have in Perth and Kinross—and a different relationship with service providers. At the beginning of the year, I invited Community Care Providers Scotland to discuss the development of a different commissioning and procurement relationship with the voluntary sector, and we are planning to run a seminar later this year for the sector to look at what the local authority actually provides, how much money we spend on services, how many people receive them and how the sector can enter into a local operationally strategic relationship with us. I think that such an approach will have benefits.

Michael Devenney: I find more and more that, with certain big-ticket items such as campus redevelopment, people are asking how pivotal they are in Moray and to the diversification of the local economy, which, given our dependence on two Royal Air Force bases, we sorely need to do something about. You mentioned resources, and I think that the community planning partnership can be very valuable in articulating specific needs in various areas. Perhaps that is a rural thing—I do not know.

Moreover, going back to the economic downturn, I think that, in the allocation of partnership action for continuing employment funding, we partners play a valuable role in exchanging intelligence on what is happening on the ground. There is a tendency to think that the recession has bypassed rural areas because we do not have large employers and therefore do not have the same large shutdowns, but one should consider the cumulative effect of the one business that shuts down here and the two businesses that shut down there.

Historically, we have been isolated in our reaction and approach to such matters, but nowadays when help or funding is sought people often ask, "Where is the community planning partnership in all this?" For example, in its lifelong partners initiative, which centred on building partnerships between schools and colleges, the previous Administration made it clear that it wanted that relationship to be founded in and looked after by community planning partnerships.

After all, it was not simply a case of the schools and colleges doing what they wanted to do; employers and other parties were obviously keen to have a say as well.

Raymond Burns: I think that the issue is less about changing priorities than about shifting their emphasis. The community planning partnership has enough vision to challenge not only its own activities but the activities of some of the partners. For example, with Glasgow City Council's apprenticeship scheme, the full range of community planning partners has been set the challenge of seeking further modern apprenticeships in the city right up to 2014, and it will be interesting to see how they respond.

David McLetchie: The first round of single outcome agreements—or SOA 1, if I can call it that—has been criticised for the very poor alignment of the outcomes and indicators set out at a national level in the historic concordat with the single outcome agreements negotiated between individual councils and the Government. Is that a fair criticism?

Raymond Burns: To call it poor is probably being overly harsh. With SOA 1, a lot of work had to be carried out in a very tight timescale to get all the partners around the table early doors and ensure partnership buy-in and alignment. In Glasgow, we brought together a number of strategic priorities from different organisational strategic documents, and there was a lot of negotiation over how they should be aligned. I recently read in a paper that one of the bigger questions was which of the national outcomes alcohol should be aligned with, and I believe that in the end it was aligned with four or five of them. For example, some community planning partnerships treated it as a safety issue, while others aligned it with health or mental illness outcomes. There was certainly an issue about how these high-level matters should be dealt with.

David Burke: As I explained earlier, in Perth and Kinross we tried to link the national indicators to the local outcomes that we had already constructed for our corporate plan and to look through them to indicators that were appearing in service plans to ensure that we could provide evidence. You might think that that was not acceptable or good enough; I think that it was the best way of beginning to develop a single outcome agreement.

Our partners and our partnership have found it difficult to ensure that the performance information that we bring into the single outcome agreement allows us to develop the evidence. Some of the indicators are long term—they have a longer lifespan than the single outcome agreement—and some of the health improvement, efficiency, access and treatment targets are about process and numbers. One way to improve the single outcome agreements is to spend time on a national examination of outcomes that provide evidence of improvement.

11:45

Michael Devenney: My understanding is that the alignment is close but the emphasis varies from authority to authority to reflect local circumstances, such as those with alcohol. In Moray, the emphasis is on flood alleviation and the fact that we have the lowest wage economy in Scotland—it is specific. Working from the evidence base alerts us to the fact that there are specific matters that need particular attention in our own areas but may not apply elsewhere in Scotland.

David McLetchie: So you think that, in Moray, there was a close alignment between the national outcomes and indicators and what you set out in your agreement with the Government in SOA 1.

Michael Devenney: Yes, absolutely.

David McLetchie: That is interesting. Perhaps Mr Burns and Mr Burke have slight reservations in that respect. If it is unfair to characterise the alignment as poor—that might be harsh in the circumstances—is it fair to say that it should be better?

Raymond Burns: Yes, I am fairly confident that, for Glasgow, the alignment in SOA 2 is significantly better.

David McLetchie: Is it significantly better in SOA 2 for Perth and Kinross, Mr Burke? You will sign that agreement in about 11 days, will you not?

David Burke: Yes. My earlier comment was not intended to indicate that the single outcome agreement was not aligned with the national outcomes; I was trying to explain how we aligned it. We achieved an alignment that was appropriate for its stage of development. The SOA should be subject to continuous improvement and I hope that alignment and evidence will be better next year, but that is what I hope for our services every year.

David McLetchie: Does that mean that some of the national outcomes have to be changed, or is it simply a matter of local government having to adapt and conform to the national outcomes that COSLA sets down for it?

David Burke: That is an exceptionally interesting question about the relationship between the Scottish Government and local government. I am not equipped to answer it because that is not where my experience lies.

David McLetchie: Mr Devenney, I presume that Moray cannot improve on the perfect alignment of SOA 1. Is that fair?

Michael Devenney: That is not quite what I said; I said that a conscious effort had been made to achieve a good alignment. We have been closely advised by the Improvement Service and others, and in correspondence we were advised that we ought to beef up the consideration given to equalities in the second single outcome agreement. The planning department's response to the economic downturn was identified as something else that could be beefed up. We have engaged in significant refinements but, from its first page, the single outcome agreement that sits in front of me gets across the message that alignment is uppermost in our thinking.

David McLetchie: I will consider what your authorities did in SOA 1 on the policy of reducing

"as quickly as is possible … class sizes in P1 to P3 to a maximum of 18"

and then ask about what will happen on it in SOA 2. That policy, to which all your authorities are committed under the concordat, received not a single specific mention in the first single outcome agreements for Glasgow City Council, Perth and Kinross Council or Moray Council. Will it be mentioned in SOA 2?

Raymond Burns: There is no reference to it in our current SOA 2 submission.

David Burke: I do not believe that our SOA 2 has an indicator on achieving that class size reduction.

David McLetchie: That is another no.

Michael Devenney: I have not committed the agreement to memory—I am having a look at the part where I think that the issue would be covered, and I do not think that it is there.

David McLetchie: A key policy is agreed to be of national significance in the historic concordat, but in SOA 2, which you are about to sign off with the Government, there is yet again no specific mention of the policy, how it will be implemented and the indicators that you will use. Is that correct?

David Burke: I tried to explain the link between the SOA and individual service planning. I am fairly confident, from memory, that class size is addressed in our education and children's services service planning. I think that there are no specific year-by-year targets on class size reduction, but the spirit of the agreement is that the policy will be worked towards.

David McLetchie: Some people think that it might take 87 years to achieve.

Mr Burns, during your negotiations on SOA 2 with the Scottish Government, which has given such prominence to its class size pledge, did it insist that Glasgow incorporate into its SOA a reference to the pledge? Was the Government quite happy to let you go away with another agreement that makes no mention of a key national policy?

Raymond Burns: In the context of our first draft and in subsequent discussions with colleagues in the Scottish Government, I do not recall any discussion about class sizes.

David McLetchie: If the Scottish Government has not insisted that you put it in your agreement, it is obvious that it does not matter much to it whether the policy is achieved for children in Glasgow.

Raymond Burns: It has not insisted on that in our discussions to date.

David McLetchie: It strikes me that the issue is not being treated seriously. Is that a fair comment? Two agreements with the largest local authority in Scotland have made no mention of the class size pledge.

Raymond Burns: I am not in a position to comment on that.

David McLetchie: No, you can leave that to me.

Patricia Ferguson: I was interested in Mr Burns's comment about where alcohol services fit in. If there are four or five different places in which local authorities or CPPs have chosen to slot the issue, how can you measure the effectiveness of work to tackle alcohol-related problems locally or nationally? I presume that you must consider outcomes of different work streams.

Raymond Burns: The issue has arisen in relation to a number of topics, such as employment. It is a question of ensuring, in the SOA, that a line is drawn to the most important national outcome and that links are identified across national and local outcomes so that people understand that work is being done on the issue across the piece. During our detailed discussions on the drafting of SOA 1, it emerged that significant pieces of work were being done under a number of funding streams, all of which related to the national outcome. We have tried our best to ensure that, for example, whether people are involved in early intervention or work to address employment problems at the end of the process, they are all identified as participants in a particular piece of work.

Patricia Ferguson: Where would I find a piece of paper that could tell me how Scotland has done, broken down by CPPs, on tackling alcohol abuse?

Raymond Burns: You would be able to identify a number of indicators, such as the number of people who have been accepted on intervention programmes and the positive outcomes of such programmes. You might have to find a different agency that records activity in the child and family

wellbeing scenario. It is difficult to put a figure on performance on alcohol—even in Glasgow—because it is treated as a different issue at different stages.

Jane Thomson (Glasgow Community Planning Partnership): Glasgow has a local outcome to reduce the harm that is caused by alcohol. Under that outcome are a range of indicators from various organisations, including crime statistics and hospital admissions that involve alcohol. We will use those safety and health indicators to report progress against the local outcome.

Patricia Ferguson: If I need to find information for the whole of Scotland, will there be the same sets of statistics or streams of information for each local authority?

David Burke: No. Single outcome agreements do not provide a national set of data that can be used to compare local authorities.

On hearing some of the questions that have been asked this morning, I thought about the place of regulation and inspection in Scotland. Regulation and inspection bodies provide the detail on outcomes and evidence, with figures, that you may be seeking. Parliamentarians can find out about activity by reading the best-value audits that have been carried out in Scotland and the statistics that are gathered by the Social Work Inspection Agency, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and the Scottish Housing Regulator. Local authorities and their community planning partners must provide a diverse range of services. I am not sure that single outcome agreements can capture all the detail that one might wish to have.

I will offer the committee one anecdote from the time when I was planning an alcohol conference for Perth and Kinross Council. I was working at a whiteboard and sectioned it off into small squares to record the activities in which the council and its community planning partners were involved that might have an effect on the misuse of alcohol. I covered the whole whiteboard with an exceptionally large number of activities that were of interest. That is the beginning of the process that Raymond Burns described.

Patricia Ferguson: We have talked a great deal about local authorities and community planning partnerships, but what about communities? Mr Burns referred to the survey that was done in Glasgow. The statistics for the community planning partnership of which I used to be a co-opted member identified dog fouling as the priority for most constituents. That came as quite a shock to those of us who thought that we should focus on issues such as deprivation, alcoholism and lack of jobs. I understand that sometimes it is about the questions that we ask and the context in which we

ask them, but how do we feed back to communities or individuals that have said that dog fouling is the issue that matters most to them? How do we say in dialogue with them that we will not concentrate our resources on the issue but that we will look at making people's streets safer, which may involve addressing dog fouling? Do we need to do that more and better? Can the other local authorities that are represented here today provide further examples?

Raymond Burns: We conducted a fairly extensive media campaign, broken down into the 10 community planning areas, on what the survey said locally. We also agreed to undertake a similar survey within two years of the initial one to identify to people the actions that had been taken and the impacts and outcomes that had resulted from it. Following the survey, actions have been identified across the city and are under way; we are awaiting their outcomes. When we get to the end of the process, we hope that there will be another survey and a report back on the actions that we have taken based on the outcomes of the first survey.

12:00

Michael Devenney: We have established a community engagement group. Our planning board has five themed strategic groups; the community engagement group is the sixth subset and it comprises elected members and representatives of most partners.

Moray Council is directing resources into the establishment of a support unit that will redirect people's efforts towards supporting our area forums. Moray has also had a citizens panel for a few years, which has involved several thousand people.

We have had good responses not only to the surveys that we have undertaken to inform our single outcome agreement but to the surveys that are conducted in a normal year to support the partnership's work. The priorities that came back from that work are pretty much aligned with what emerged as the local priorities, which include alcohol issues—to return to an earlier question. The evidence base on alcohol from which we worked, alongside what people told us that we should do, extends over three pages. You can take it from that that we have a pretty good understanding. However, I take the point readily that it seems at a glance that the sources of evidence were both local and national, and I guess that we could therefore ultimately report to ourselves about the local impact of what we have done. In so far as that is possible, that would allow the national picture to be painted.

David Burke: Dog fouling certainly seems to be an issue all over the country. One never wants

communications to be patronising, because individuals raise issues that are important to them and which can reflect how they feel that their communities are regarded.

We have a citizens panel—called viewfinder—and we regularly canvass the opinions of service users and residents in Perth and Kinross. We also have a community engagement strategy, and my community care services have reference groups for every group of people, such as older people or people with learning disabilities. We try to involve people: for example, I spoke last night at the annual general meeting of our tenants and residents federation.

Through such activity, we begin to develop the dialogue that is a bit below the surface, which is about the housing conditions to which people aspire, the neighbourhood behaviour that they face and their perception of safety in their communities. Our single outcome agreement is underpinned by the responses to the community messages about citizens' quality of life and engagement.

Patricia Ferguson: Thank you—those answers were interesting.

Jim Tolson: I am particularly interested in intelligence sharing between community health partners. I was a councillor during the instigation, establishment and first few years of delivery of community health partnerships, which involved strong partnership working. There were difficulties in sharing intelligence because individuals did not see the process working well, because of policy differences between bodies and because information technology systems were incompatible. The interim report highlights the fact that intelligence sharing has improved, so I am keen to hear from panel members where that has been evident in their areas—perhaps some examples could be given. Furthermore, where is there room for improvement in intelligence sharing among community planning partners?

Raymond Burns: I agree that intelligence sharing is crucial. For a long time, community health and care partnerships were the major stumbling block to that, but we have now managed to succeed in a range of activities under CHCPs, particularly in identifying where people are on particular drugs and alcohol programmes and sharing experience and information. That has proved useful and cost effective.

We have discussed with the Scottish Government's statistics office how we can share and break down a range of Government-led statistics. In the past, issues have arisen with enumeration districts and links back to multimember wards. A lot of work has now been done on that.

We have a good relationship with the statistics office. It has assisted us in sourcing a number of the indicator baseline figures that we needed for our SOA, which meant that we did not need to chase up our community client partners in order to find a defendable figure for a baseline. Our relationship with the statistics office has been useful in that regard, and there is a desire to do more through those processes.

David Burke: I think that the sharing of information and intelligence is exceptionally good as a result of good relationships across the partnerships.

There are sometimes practical difficulties in collating the information that we require and ensuring that it can be used as evidence for outcomes rather than processes and inputs. There are some technical difficulties around the electronic sharing of information, which have not been cracked—sometimes I lose hope that they ever will be—but, across all of the partners, there is a deep commitment to sharing the intelligence that will help to make a difference.

Michael Devenney: My sense is that we have got better in Moray. Certainly we were able to arrive at the evidence base that we have provided in this year's single outcome agreement because we devoted dedicated resources to doing so—I believe that the council has one or two analysts who are dedicated to gathering those data.

I could not comment on information sharing in the health context but, with regard to education, there is a continuing challenge for colleges and schools to ensure that there is an effective transition for young people, especially those with learning difficulties who go to colleges from the school sector. There is still work to be done in that regard.

John Wilson: On the sharing of intelligence, the Improvement Service's report indicates that one immediate benefit of the implementation of SOAs has been the sharing of intelligence between different parts of the public sector and a resultant reappraisal of local priorities. I think that the Improvement Service is implying that the sharing of intelligence would not have taken place without single outcome agreements being in place. Is that true?

David Burke: I think that the sharing of information is a result of good community planning partnership arrangements. The SOAs have helped that, but I think that it would have happened in any event.

Raymond Burns: I could not say that about the level of detail that we have in our SOA, but I can say that, because of the range of indicators and the information that we have sought in our SOA,

there has been an increase in cross-public sector activity and data sharing.

The Convener: I thank the witnesses for their attendance and the evidence that they have given us this morning.

We now move into private session.

12:08

Meeting continued in private until 12:29.

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