



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

### JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 23 November 2010

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body 2010

Applications for reproduction should be made in writing to the Information Policy Team, Office of the Queen's Printer for Scotland, Admail ADM4058, Edinburgh, EH1 1NG, or by email to:  
[licensing@ogps.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@ogps.gov.uk).

OQPS administers the copyright on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.

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

---

**Tuesday 23 November 2010**

**CONTENTS**

	<b>Col.</b>
<b>DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE .....</b>	<b>3807</b>
<b>DRAFT BUDGET SCRUTINY 2011-12 .....</b>	<b>3808</b>

---

**JUSTICE COMMITTEE**  
**32<sup>nd</sup> Meeting 2010, Session 3**

**CONVENER**

\*Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD)  
\*Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
\*Nigel Don (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
\*James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
\*Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
\*Dave Thompson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

**COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES**

\*Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
John Lamont (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
Maureen Watt (North East Scotland) (SNP)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:**

Doug Cross (Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland)  
Jim Hunter (North Strathclyde Community Justice Authority)  
Gillian Little (Glasgow Community Justice Authority)  
Chief Superintendent David O'Connor (Association of Scottish Police Superintendents)  
Sandy Riddell (Association of Directors of Social Work)  
Calum Steele (Scottish Police Federation)  
Chief Constable David Strang (Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland)  
Bailie Helen Wright (Community Justice Authorities Conveners Group)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Andrew Mylne

**LOCATION**

Committee Room 1



## Scottish Parliament

### Justice Committee

*Tuesday 23 November 2010*

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 10:06*]

### Decision on Taking Business in Private

**The Convener (Bill Aitken):** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I remind everyone to ensure that their mobile phones are switched off. We have received apologies from Bill Butler MSP. Claire Baker MSP will attend in his place.

The first item of business is to decide whether to take in private item 3 and, at future meetings, our discussion of the main themes arising from written and oral evidence on the committee's scrutiny of the 2011-12 draft budget. Are members agreed?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

## Draft Budget Scrutiny 2011-12

10:06

**The Convener:** This morning's principal item of business is the first of two evidence-taking sessions for our draft budget scrutiny. A note has been prepared by our adviser, Eddie Frizzell, who is attending this morning, and a letter from the Public Audit Committee about the Scottish Police Services Authority has also been circulated to members, although I point out that it is probably of more relevance to next week's meeting, when we will take evidence from that organisation.

I welcome to the meeting our first panel of witnesses: Chief Constable David Strang, executive vice-president of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland, and Doug Cross, the chair of ACPOS's finance management business area; Calum Steele, who is the general secretary of the Scottish Police Federation; and Chief Superintendent David O'Connor and Carol Forfar, who are, respectively, national president and general secretary of the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents.

I am well aware that politicians should not ask questions to which they do not know the answers, but I am sure that Chief Constable Strang will be able to tell us the current police numbers.

**Chief Constable David Strang (Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland):** As of 19 November, there are 17,383 police officers and 6,276 full-time equivalent police staff.

**The Convener:** That is very helpful.

Let us get to the meat of the matter. What are the implications for police officer numbers of the Scottish Government's 2011-12 spending proposals? In particular, given the Scottish Government's proposal in the budget document, will it be possible to maintain the 1,000 additional officers who have been funded since March 2007?

**Chief Constable Strang:** My understanding is that although next year's budget contains a cash reduction of 2.6 per cent from our 2010-11 budget, there has been a commitment to maintain police officer numbers at the target number of 17,234. In a way, the answer to your question is that, if we are required to maintain police officer numbers, that will happen. As a consequence, the 2.6 per cent cash reduction, which is actually a 5 to 6 per cent real-terms reduction, will need to fall elsewhere in police budgets through efficiency savings, shared services and reduction in police support staff numbers. If there is a requirement to maintain police officer numbers, we will do that, because I understand that the budget is dependent on those numbers being maintained.

**Doug Cross (Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland):** It is important to recognise that the establishments within police forces are made up of a number of factors. We have the funded base establishment, which was in place prior to April 2007, and the additional 1,000 officers were funded by the Scottish Government. There are officers, such as ports officers, who are funded by other grants, and there are officers who are funded by local authorities and by charging third parties, such as airports. There are also secondments to other organisations. Any of those elements can change during the course of a year, so it is very much a case of balancing all our resources and sources of funding so that we can maintain police officer numbers.

As Mr Strang said, the terms of the budget deal that is on offer are such that we must concentrate on maintaining officer numbers and find our efficiencies from what is, in effect, about a third of the remainder of our budget.

**The Convener:** That is perfectly clear.

**Chief Superintendent David O'Connor (Association of Scottish Police Superintendents):** We fully support the drive to retain officer numbers, but we must ensure that there is a balance between front-line operational policing and the structure that is needed to support the front line. At times it is easy to regard the front line as the visible aspect of policing, but that can be a narrow and simplistic view. As we maintain officer numbers, there must be a focus on ensuring that police officers are out in communities exercising their powers and protecting communities.

**Calum Steele (Scottish Police Federation):** Officer numbers can be maintained—indeed, as Mr Strang and Doug Cross said, the draft budget is conditional on that being delivered.

We should not lose sight of the fact that the strong and significant policing presence in Scotland has led to a 30-year low in crime—with the murder rates in the capital and in Glasgow the lowest in a decade and in 20 years. At a time when all areas of the public sector in Scotland will face significant challenges, the public does not need to be concerned that their safety and security will be threatened as a consequence of any diminution in policing services. I am sure that all politicians who meet people on their doorsteps realise the importance of the public good in relation to policing. As a consequence of the significant investment in policing, there is no doubt that communities not only are safer but feel safer.

Other areas of public spending will be in significant difficulty, but investment in policing will mitigate the effects of that by helping to take pressure off other services. For example,

investment in policing will ensure that the schools budget can be spent on teachers and teaching our children, rather than on maintaining vandalised buildings, and that the hospitals budget can be spent on keeping our sick and elderly people well, rather than on dealing with services that are overrun with victims of needless assaults on Friday and Saturday nights.

**The Convener:** I think that there is a consensus.

I appreciate that proposals in relation to regulation A19 of the Police Pensions Regulations 1987 have caused controversy. Mr Steele, is it the case that you see no need for early retirements under regulation A19?

**Calum Steele:** At a time when there is a drive to maintain police officer numbers, it would seem anomalous to dispose, through regulation A19, of the very individuals who have contributed a great deal to the police service. We cannot overnight replace the skills and experience of an individual who has more than 30 years' pensionable service. I would like to think that the proposals on A19 would be disregarded, if for no reasons other than humanity and the need to give individuals the opportunity to leave the service with dignity.

**Chief Constable Strang:** I would put a different emphasis on the issue. Nobody is talking about early retirement: the A19 provision is that officers who have completed 30 years' pensionable service can retire on a full pension.

Although I agree with Calum Steele's comments about experience, officers with 30 years' service are much more expensive than new recruits, so if you are looking to maintain police officer numbers, if two such officers retire, we can recruit three new police officers. In some senses, therefore, the financial argument for requiring eligible officers to retire, recruiting new police officers and maintaining a balance through the service is compelling.

10:15

**Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) (SNP):** You said that the current figure is 17,383 and that the 1,000 additional officers relates to a target figure of 17,234. There is a difference of 149. Given that there are eight police forces in Scotland, how will you co-ordinate across those forces any decline—assuming that that is likely—from 17,383 towards 17,234? If one police force—for example, the biggest one, which is Strathclyde—loses a lot of officers, the figure might still be above 17,234 but it would leave no room for other forces to reduce their numbers slightly.

**Chief Constable Strang:** The figures that I have given are collated figures from the eight forces and from people on central service. There is no mechanism for co-ordinating that across Scotland. Each police authority and each police force has its own budget and makes its own decisions about what is spent on equipment, police support staff and police officers. We anticipate managing it by having a pro rata number for each force, so that each of the eight forces knows what its proportion is—in my case it is 18 per cent of police officer numbers—which becomes the target for that force. It would be a matter for each police authority and police force to ensure that they deliver those overall police officer numbers in line with the commitment that has been given.

**Stewart Maxwell:** Has that been agreed between the eight police boards?

**Doug Cross:** At the outset, back in April 2007, there was a figure for each police force and the additional 1,000 officers were apportioned between the forces on the basis of a formula, so each force is aware of what its target is as part of the 17,234. Of course, there will be some oversight from ACPOS's personnel and training business area and also from my finance management business area. We will be very interested in ensuring that there is progress on the numbers. Of course, under the terms of the budget settlement, it will also be a matter of interest for police boards and councils in relation to the funding that they will receive and what the position may be if the number should fall below that figure.

**Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD):** Paragraph 3.8 of ACPOS's written submission refers to the effects of the remaining part of the police pay deal, which runs until August 2011. You indicate that it adds

"3% budget pressures to police budgets".

I want to be clear about what we are talking about. Do you mean 3 per cent per annum, or is that the total impact on this year's budget of the five remaining months of the increase?

**Doug Cross:** The 3 per cent figure relates specifically to 2011-12. It is primarily a consequence of the fact that police officers and police staff are in year 3 of a three-year pay deal, which runs from September through to 31 August, so the remaining five months of pay deals, plus increments, plus anticipated employers' costs such as national insurance and so on effectively contribute to that 3 per cent impact in 2011-12.

**Robert Brown:** I do not fully understand why increments should be an issue. It seems to me that increments, as Mr Strang in effect said earlier, come in at one end and go out the other as the balance of the force changes. Why should

increments be an issue in immediate budgetary terms?

**Doug Cross:** It is more of an issue latterly because of the fact that we have just brought in an additional 1,000 police officers over a very short period, which is a significant increase. All those officers will, in effect, be working through the pay scales and will have increments. We anticipate that, because of the terms of the settlement, fewer officers will leave, so the likelihood is that there will be less offset from officers at the top end retiring and compensating for those coming through on increments.

In addition, most police forces, like other public sector bodies, have undertaken some form of job evaluation project to ensure equal pay. That will probably result in higher increments for police staff for a couple of years.

**Robert Brown:** The general point that you make in paragraph 3.8 of your submission is that there will be a real-terms impact on the police budget of 6 per cent. To repeat the convener's question, are you confident that you can maintain police numbers in that context?

**Doug Cross:** We must, in effect, find the 6 per cent from about a third of our budget, which equates to a real-terms cut of 18 per cent from that part of the budget. We are looking at every aspect of force budgets—all the efficiencies that we can generate, from every angle. As Mr Strang said, it is inevitable that there will also be a reduction in police staff numbers, because that is the only place to which we can go after we have generated the efficiencies that do not impact on police officer or police staff numbers.

**Dave Thompson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** You mentioned that each force had a base figure back in 2007. In 2007, the figure for Northern Constabulary was 707, whereas earlier this year it was 798. A quick calculation shows that that is an increase of roughly 13 per cent, whereas the overall increase of 1,000 on the base figure of 16,000 officers is about 6 per cent. Are those figures absolute? Will Northern Constabulary need to lose 91 officers to go back to the figure of 707—a 13 per cent reduction—or will there be room for discussion between forces to ensure that forces that have managed to get in additional front-line police officers, perhaps by cutting the number of support staff and so on, are not unduly penalised?

**Chief Constable Strang:** The 1,000 additional officers to whom we refer are Scottish Government-funded additional officers. In addition, Lothian and Borders Police has local authority-funded officers; the City of Edinburgh Council funds about 100 additional officers. There are other sources of funding for additional officers.

If Northern Constabulary had 707 officers in 2007, its share of the additional 1,000 officers will be proportionate to that—the figure will not go back down to 707. As I said in my answer to the first question about overall numbers, each force manages its budget—budgets are independent and are set by police authorities. The numbers for which forces will aim will be their proportion of the total. When it comes to the 1,000 extra officers, each force will look for an increase of about 6 per cent on the position in 2007.

**Dave Thompson:** In theory, Northern Constabulary could lose roughly 40 officers and still meet the target. It has 91 additional officers, which represents an increase of about 13 per cent; the overall figure of 1,000 officers represents an increase of 6 per cent. If Northern Constabulary lost half of those 91 officers, it would achieve the figure of 6 per cent.

**Chief Constable Strang:** I do not have specific details for Northern Constabulary. I have already indicated that there are 17,383 police officers in Scotland. Across Scotland, we could lose 149 police officers and still be above the target of 17,234, because in 2007 there were 16,234 police officers in Scotland.

**The Convener:** It would be best for us to seek the figure for Northern Constabulary from the force's chief constable.

**James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab):** Many figures were bandied about prior to the budget's publication. The Scottish Police Federation referred to a potential squeeze of £88 million, resulting in the potential loss of 2,800 officers. Following the budget's publication, ACPOS has identified a cash reduction of £25 million and a reduction in capital of £4.6 million.

As has been brought out in the questioning, there are major challenges in maintaining police officer numbers. What is the panel's view on the Scottish Government's decision to publish a one-year budget as opposed to a four-year budget? I would have thought that, to meet the challenges that police forces will have to meet in the coming period, to get the best out of their resources and to build effective forces that can maximise their ability to ensure public safety, being able to plan over a longer period would have been advantageous to the forces. What is the panel's view on that?

**Chief Constable Strang:** I am happy to answer that. We plan over a three or four-year period, and the announcement of the indicative reduction in public sector budgets over the next four years has informed a lot of the work that we have been doing since the United Kingdom election.

The reality is that, every year, our budgets are set for only one year. In most areas, the police board meeting in January fixes the budget for the next year. Although there might be an indicative three-year budget, it is never set: we only ever have a budget set for one year. Although it looks as though a 2.6 per cent cash reduction in year 1 will be manageable, comparable reductions in years 2, 3 and 4 will make maintaining police officer numbers impossible. We are very much looking to share services with local authorities and the public sector locally, and we are also looking to share services across forces. The four forces in the east of Scotland—Lothian and Borders Police, Fife Constabulary, Central Scotland Police and Tayside Police—are looking to combine not just back-office functions, but some operational functions such as firearms, road policing and so on, all with the purpose of maintaining front-line services as best we can and reducing back-office and senior officer costs.

**Chief Superintendent O'Connor:** We have some concerns about short-termism and the pressures that are put on chief constables and police boards to balance their books and prepare their budgets for the end of the financial year. It is a big challenge that we face, and there is potential for a loss of people, skills and experience from the service.

In terms of the longer-term view, there has been a lot of debate and on-going discussion about police instructors, functions and the like. We are concerned that, in the absence of a strategic direction for policing, we may in the short term lose skills, experience and people that the service in Scotland may need to buy back in the longer term.

**The Convener:** Mr Steele, does the federation have a view on the matter?

**Calum Steele:** I am mindful of the fact that I am sitting in a Parliament full of politicians and that, when it comes to politics, it might be best for the Scottish Police Federation to leave that to those who are asking the questions on this occasion.

**The Convener:** You do not do a bad job, nonetheless.

**Calum Steele:** On the question whether it is ideal that we have a one-year budget as opposed to a three or four-year budget, the obvious answer is no—of course it is not ideal. However, we are mindful that politicians will continue to politick, no matter which party they come from. A one-year budget preceded the general election at Westminster, so it comes as no surprise that a one-year budget precedes the Scottish election.

**The Convener:** Let us move on from the operational front line.

**Dave Thompson:** I have a question on support staff. The Scottish Parliament information centre briefing notes that non-police staff account for about a third of the police workforce, although some of them could be doing police work—I presume that they would not all be classified as support staff. The number of support staff in 2008-09 was 6,440; in 2009-10, the number had gone up to 6,517. However, Chief Constable Strang said that the number is now 6,276, which is down by 341 since April. Given the fact that there has been a fairly substantial reduction in the number of support staff already this year, do you feel that there is a need for a further significant reduction over the next year? If that is going to happen, can it be done without redundancies?

10:30

**Chief Constable Strang:** The answer to your first question is that there will need to be a subsequent reduction in police support staff numbers. If police officer numbers are protected in absolute terms but there is a disproportionate cut, as Doug Cross said, in the budget for others, that will affect police support staff numbers.

I want to make a distinction between two groups of police staff. First, there are those who have contact with the public and who provide front-line services, whether they are station assistants, people who answer the telephone in a force communications centre or custody officers—some forces have civilian custody officers. Then there are those who perform back-office functions, such as finance, human resources and procurement, which are non-specific police functions. We have already reduced police staff numbers and will look to reduce them further in an effort to make efficiencies and savings in areas such as managing the estate, vehicles, finance and HR. We will do so by sharing more services either across the eight police forces or locally, which in my case would involve sharing services with NHS Lothian, NHS Borders or the five local authorities in my force area.

If we reduce the number of front-line staff who do essential jobs, there is a real risk that we will have to remove police officers from other duties. For example, if we make custody officers redundant, we will have to release police officers to look after prisoners in police stations.

Every force has a programme of voluntary redundancies, which is our first avenue for reducing the number of police support staff, and a number of people have volunteered for that. At the moment, no force has plans for compulsory redundancy, but that cannot be ruled out, depending on the severity of the budget cuts.

**Dave Thompson:** Does anyone else wish to comment?

**Chief Superintendent O'Connor:** As I said earlier, it is all about striking a balance. It would be a concern if we were to reduce the support staff element that is available across the country and got to a position in which we had to withdraw highly trained, experienced police officers from communities to perform some type of office duty or support function. I do not think that that would be cost effective; more important, it would not be a good use of police resources.

**Calum Steele:** We have a situation in Scotland in which the average support staff to police ratio is about 1:2.5 to 1:2.7, which is one of the highest that I have ever encountered. I was over in Ireland fairly recently, where the ratio of support staff to police is in the region of between 1:9 and 1:20.

As the police service is currently structured, there is an argument that if a member of support staff is taken out of their role, that will be back-filled by a police officer but, as Mr Strang said, the issue is whether the role is essential. If we take support staff out of some roles, some things will not get done, but if we take police officers off the street, policing will not get done. What is important is how that balance is managed.

I do not believe that every job that is being done by a member of support staff is essential. Across the service, we spend millions on corporate communications departments and diversity departments. As important as diversity is, quite frankly, if we have to spend tens of millions of pounds on that every year, we are taking the wrong people into the service.

We have people in front-office departments, in typing pools and in many other areas who give a phenomenal amount to the public and to the service.

My force—Northern Constabulary—has been the subject of two or three best-value reviews. Ironically, on each occasion that a best-value review has been undertaken, the one area of the force that is probably criticised most by those within it—the HR department—has not shrunk although other areas of the force have.

We need to examine properly what needs to be done—not what we currently do, but what genuinely needs to be done. That is a real issue. Like I said, some things might not get done. Some parliamentary questions that are asked of the staff in St Andrew's house might not get answered, but that does not necessarily have an impact on the delivery of service.

**The Convener:** You indicated that the ratio of ancillary staff to police officers is less than 1:3 in Scotland whereas, in Northern Ireland, it is 1:9.

That is an important point. Are you satisfied that it is an apposite comparison?

**Calum Steele:** It was not Northern Ireland but the south of Ireland. I met my counterpart from the Garda Representative Association in the past few weeks. That was certainly the figure that he presented to me.

**The Convener:** Are you satisfied that it is a realistic comparison?

**Calum Steele:** I can only go on the information that I have been given. The research that I have undertaken indicates that there is a structural difference, in that the support staff in Ireland are allied to all areas of the public sector; they are not employed directly by the Garda Síochána. They are, in effect, civil servants who are allocated to not only the police service but the fire service and other areas of public sector work. They have a career structure within the civil service that allows them to work between any of its different areas.

The Garda Síochána support staff are not directly analogous to ours, but it is interesting that a country not too far away from us has a ratio as low as 1:9.

**Robert Brown:** I take it that the Scottish Police Federation does not represent the interests of the support staff. Is that a reasonable assumption? I ask for the avoidance of doubt.

**Calum Steele:** That takes us back to the convener's opening comments about asking a question to which you know the answer. *[Laughter.]* We do not represent the interests of the support staff.

**Robert Brown:** I did not think that you did.

Mr Strang, if we take the 18 per cent reduction about which you spoke, it appears that you are looking to lose about 1,200 civilian support staff. Is that right? Is there a planning assumption of anything of that sort? Is there any difference between the front-facing staff about whom you talked and the HR and other staff who were also mentioned?

**Chief Constable Strang:** I will ask Doug Cross to talk about the numbers in detail, but they are of that order. It is not so much a planning assumption as that the simple mathematics lead us to that sort of number.

We are examining whether each force needs the size of HR department that it has and asking whether we could share a service and, thereby, reduce the numbers. However, it is also important to say that we do not want to go back a stage. Part of the modernisation of policing has been civilianisation and, in particular, upskilling. There is sometimes a mistaken assumption that all civilian police staff are doing jobs that a police officer

could step in and do, but police support staff play other key roles that police officers simply could not play—intelligence analysts, information technology specialists on e-crime, scientists and occupational health nurses, for example.

Our main focus will be to try to protect the front-line services—the jobs that make a real difference to the public—so that we can protect the public as best we can and reduce the back office in a way that they will not notice.

**Doug Cross:** It is not unfair to assume a reduction of 1,200 in support staff, although that figure is higher than we anticipate at the moment.

As Mr Strang said, the initial stages are that every force will have a voluntary redundancy and early retirement scheme. The numbers that come from that are likely to be considerably smaller than those that are required to balance the budget, so it is likely that we will have to go back and have a more targeted voluntary redundancy scheme. If the numbers do not come through from that, we will potentially move into compulsory redundancies.

I will pick up on a previous question. Over many years, it has been recognised that police forces have become more efficient and effective through civilianisation, which has released police officers from some of the back-office functions. Because that has been more cost effective, we have been able to invest the savings back into front-line policing and augment it through that process.

As you indicated, it is inevitable that the number of police staff will have to be reduced significantly as a consequence of the budget settlement. That means that potentially—although not in every case, as Calum Steele said—some of those civilianised posts will be decivilianised. We might find that, because of a lack of specialist skills and knowledge, we have to recivilianise them at some point in the future.

If I may touch on an earlier point, it is very difficult to do complete financial planning within a one-year timeframe. A longer period is easier to manage and budget for.

**Robert Brown:** Can you give us any flavour of the divide between the civilianised police officer sort of staff and the backroom ones: the 6,000-odd that you are talking about?

**Doug Cross:** That is extremely difficult to do, because the process that the forces are going through is about voluntary redundancy and early retirement—people who effectively volunteer to leave the service.

**Robert Brown:** I do not mean the numbers that you are losing but the current numbers—the 6,000 in post. I just want a flavour. I appreciate that it is subject to definitional issues.

**Doug Cross:** I would not like to speculate at this point. We might be able to provide that information later.

**The Convener:** Understandably, that is quite a difficult question.

**Robert Brown:** I appreciate that. Is it a one-for-one substitution? If you take out one civilian staff member, such as a custody officer or whatever, will they be replaced by one police officer, or is that too simplistic a view?

**Doug Cross:** To carry out the function, it might be a one-for-one substitution, but there would be a difference between the cost of employing a police officer in that role and the cost of employing a custody officer.

**Dave Thompson:** According to the figures that we have and the figure that the chief constable mentioned, 341 support staff have already gone since April this year. You said that 1,200 would be a bit on the high side. It looks as if in the current year you are already a third of the way to getting the reduction in the budgets that you are going to need for next year. We are looking at a one-year budget. There will be a major review of public services, which could change things considerably. It is very difficult for any of us to know where that will lead. There could be significant savings for following years. Do you accept that you are a good way down the road already this year, having reduced the number of support staff to that extent?

**Doug Cross:** It would not be right to put the reduction of 341 alongside the target that was mentioned. You suggested that we are about a third of the way there. Like funding for police officers, funding for police staff comes through various mechanisms. Some of them are funded through local authorities and some are funded by direct grants. The police budgets have been under pressure this year, there has already been a reduction in police staff, and there will be vacancy management. Some of that will be about preparing ourselves for 2011-12, but some of it will be about staying within our budgets for 2010-11. There will be some dividend and contribution from that, but not necessarily the full 341.

**Chief Superintendent O'Connor:** It is sometimes very difficult to establish where the front line starts and the back office ends. What we are talking about is people's lives, not just numbers, percentages and reductions. We are talking about important and valued members of the police family. The support staff who have been with various forces over many years are highly skilled—they have many skills—and have much to offer the service. Although it is an area in which we will see a reduction, we have to remember that we are talking about people's lives—people who

have been committed and loyal to the police service throughout Scotland.

**The Convener:** We are conscious of that.

I am quite anxious to move on. You have to some extent anticipated questions that Cathie Craigie was going to ask. There is an important issue regarding police pensions.

**Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab):** Okay, but I have not finished asking about support staff yet. I thank Mr O'Connor for bringing us back on to that point, because I have always seen support staff as an integral part of the police operation, and I know that my community and serving police officers in the area that I represent do, too. I recently met support staff, who are really doing a good job. I shudder to think what is going to happen when we reduce the numbers and how the police will be able to continue to make our communities feel safe, as Mr Steele said earlier.

This morning, listening to the panel, it seems to me that the police service is being run solely with an eye to the figure of a thousand additional officers. Are your lives just taken up with ways of maintaining that number rather than with finding ways of efficiently delivering policing services?

10:45

**Chief Constable Strang:** It is fair to say that we have been asked very much about the police officer numbers. However, I am glad that you raise the issue of the outcomes that we are delivering, which are much more important. We are very much focused on the question of the outcomes that communities want. When you consider the outcomes rather than the inputs, it is evident that policing over the past four years has been enormously successful. Crime is down, detection rates are up and fewer people are killed and injured on the roads. I should also mention our partnership work on preventing crime through the package of early intervention, child protection, managing sex offenders and so on. Lots of things have contributed to making every community across Scotland safer. The latest crime and justice household survey showed not only that the numbers were going down but that people were beginning to acknowledge that crime was not rising in their area, and a high percentage of people said that they felt safer.

I would much rather that we were judged on how well we deliver the outcomes, in partnership with others through community planning partnerships, the single outcome agreements and so on. You are absolutely right to say that those are the things that we have achieved, and that is what we concentrate on. We have concentrated on the numbers today because there has been

that imperative and there has been the funding for the additional 1,000 officers.

**Cathie Craigie:** I am sorry to address this question directly to you, Mr Strang but, in order to deliver the same outcomes while saving money, is the only way in which you can make those savings—given that you cannot reduce the number of officers below whatever number you have—to pay off a couple of support staff, who might be investigative support staff or perhaps turnkeys? In order to maintain that number of officers, will you have to make life much more difficult for yourselves and take police off the street?

**Chief Constable Strang:** I welcome the fact that Parliament voted to spend that money on policing. I do not want in any way to be churlish about that. There has been greater investment in policing over the past three or four years, and that has led to a better policing service, greater engagement with communities and better outcomes. I would prefer that level of funding to remain and for chief constables to retain their flexibility. However, as has been said, if the money is conditional on the number of police officers being maintained, we have no option, and we will maintain that number. Our first consideration will be to examine whether we can reduce the number of back-office staff or do certain things more efficiently. Those will be the areas in which, in the first instance, we will seek to reduce spend. However, I cannot deny that, ultimately, we might have to reduce police staff and take an officer off the street to do their work, in order to maintain police officer numbers. However, that would be our last resort, not our first.

**Cathie Craigie:** The Justice Committee has spoken about support staff before. Do you still believe that support staff are as important to your objective of delivering safe communities as is the number of police officers?

**Chief Constable Strang:** The police staff's functions are hugely important. Our force communication centre, which takes every call from the public, is 90 per cent staffed by police staff, who are specifically trained for that job and work in shifts. Many of them have been working there for five or 10 years, which provides greater continuity than would be provided if we used police officers to do their job, as there would be a greater turnover of police officers. The issue also involves people such as forensic scientists and analysts.

Police staff, who make up almost a third of our personnel, play an absolutely vital role in providing the policing service. I know that the Scottish Police Federation looks at police officers because it represents them, but from my point of view, in delivering a policing service to the public I value equally police staff and police officers. If anyone is

doing a job that is not important, they need to be moved or replaced—I do not make a distinction.

**Cathie Craigie:** Do you want to add something, Mr O'Connor?

**Chief Superintendent O'Connor:** I want just to make the point that the police have changed significantly over the past decade. We have heavily invested in community safety, youth-related activities and all the things that are intended to divert people away from crime and antisocial behaviour and which work well. Perhaps there needs to be a discussion about the core functions of policing as laid out in the Police (Scotland) Act 1967. Those are

“to guard, patrol and watch”,

to prevent and detect crime, and to bring

“the offender with all due speed to justice”.

Over the years, we have got involved with a number of things that might not be core functions, but which are desirable to communities. For example, we keep communities safe by working with young people and by protecting the weak, the old and the vulnerable. We have been drawn into more and more community safety activities. Those are all very important, but we are starting to look at our services now. Police officer numbers are important, but equally important is what we do with them to deliver the service. Sometimes we act as social paramedics in communities, responding to all their ills, but perhaps there needs to be a focus on what policing is actually about. I accept that we play a great role in child protection, offender management, the protection of vulnerable groups, and dealing with domestic abuse and domestic violence. All those things are important. However, perhaps we need a debate about policing functions.

**Cathie Craigie:** The committee did a report on that subject and I recommend that you read it. I cannot remember when we published it—was it 2007 or 2008? It makes for a wonderful read.

**The Convener:** It was at the start of 2008. Let us move on to pensions.

**Cathie Craigie:** Is the same cash provision of £217.3 million, as in the current budget, sufficient to meet police pension costs in 2011-12?

**Doug Cross:** The figures come from information that we provided to the Scottish Government; the estimates should be sufficient to meet police pension costs.

As we have said several times today, the protection of police officer numbers and the ways in which forces will go about that will probably result in a reduction in the number of police officers who retire. Pension costs are made up of two elements—the commutation cost and the

recurring monthly pension cost. It is likely that there will be a reduction in the commutation cost because fewer police officers will retire, and there will be a knock-on effect on the monthly pension cost. If the information is based on the figures that we gave the Scottish Government, the current cash provision should be sufficient.

**The Convener:** Are you reasonably reassured, Mr Steele and Mr O'Connor?

**Calum Steele:** It is always reassuring to hear that the money is there for pensions. [*Laughter.*]

**The Convener:** I thought that it might be.

**Cathie Craigie:** So the figures are based on calculations that the police gave to Scottish ministers.

**Doug Cross:** As you will understand, the centralisation of police pensions is relatively new so we provide a quarterly return, which gives our best estimate of the number of officers that we think will retire in the course of the year. That is not always easy to estimate, but we have a go at it. As for the overall costs, we tend to project that a significant number of police officers who are eligible to retire will retire. I suspect that during 2011-12, those numbers will be lower than in normal years as we protect police officer numbers.

**Cathie Craigie:** If a police officer is eligible to retire and applies to their board for retirement, is that automatically agreed to?

**Doug Cross:** If a police officer applies for retirement, yes.

**Cathie Craigie:** If they have the eligible years.

**Doug Cross:** Yes, if they have the pensionable service. Anytime after 25 years' service, a police officer can apply to retire and get their pension. However, the other side of the coin of course is that police officers quite often exceed 30 years and choose to stay on.

**Cathie Craigie:** You said that because of the requirement to keep police numbers up fewer people might retire. How does that work?

**Doug Cross:** There was talk earlier on about the likely use of regulation A19. It is less likely to be applied during 2011-12. We have found in the past couple of years that there has been a general slowing down in the number of police officers who retire; that is, more are going beyond their 30 years. We anticipate that that is likely to continue. Even if the level stays as it is at present, I do not think that it will result in an underprovision for police pensions within the Scottish Government budget.

**Cathie Craigie:** Is it good or bad for the overall police pension scheme if people go on for longer?

**Doug Cross:** In overall terms, it is probably preferable for the police pension scheme because it means that those officers are continuing to pay in their 11 per cent pension contributions without taking out all their benefits when they reach 30 years. From that aspect, if we look purely at the police pension arrangements, it is probably favourable.

**Robert Brown:** Mr Strang outlined earlier the role and the different functions of the police, and Mr O'Connor said that how the police operate has changed because of partnership working and so on. I am aware that things such as operation reclaim in Glasgow and the Inverclyde initiative have contributed to crime reductions in the communities involved of—so we are told—somewhere in the region of a third. Obviously, therefore, those wider, non-core functions are of some importance. Against that background, is there an agreed view across the police service on which of the police's various activities should have the highest priority at a time of tighter budgets?

**Chief Constable Strang:** That is an interesting question, because things vary according to, for example, the threat level from terrorism; if the threat level were to rise again, that would become our priority and we would put officers into it. However, I would put a slightly different emphasis on what David O'Connor said about core policing. I think that he was going back to the 1967 act approach of "guard, patrol and watch", but things have moved on hugely. Community safety is a core activity of policing. Our policing role is almost defined by the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, which gives a statutory duty to be engaged in community planning with our partners.

It is universally acknowledged in the police that prevention is much better than post hoc investigation. If we can tackle some of the causes of crime and be engaged in diversion schemes that reduce harm in the future, there will be fewer crimes and incidents for us to deal with. That is certainly the policing philosophy. If we can invest in activities that reduce crime in the first place, we will reap rewards and benefits in years to come as the crime rate continues to fall. Part of what has happened over the past four years is through engagement with community safety in partnerships with joint safer communities units working with local authorities and with communities. We have seen a reduction in antisocial behaviour, vandalism, youth disorder and so on. That has been a real benefit. I know that some might criticise that approach and say, "Well, that's not really core policing," but it is. If we are called to deal with a crime after it has happened, in a sense there has been a failure of prevention. The public want an emphasis on protection and prevention. They want lower crime rates and, instead of the police simply dealing with

crimes that have been committed, they want officers out and about in their communities as a preventive measure.

11:00

My personal preference, therefore, is that we continue to invest in prevention and partnership working. It would be a fallacy for the public sector to give up on such working and return to some old-fashioned, 40-year-old view of health, education and the police. Indeed, I know from speaking to other public sector leaders that they recognise the need to maintain our partnership, prevention and early intervention work if we are not to lose the ground that we have gained in recent years.

**Robert Brown:** Are you expressing an old-fashioned view, Mr O'Connor?

**Chief Superintendent O'Connor:** Perhaps, but I fully agree that initiatives such as the safe highlander programme, choices for life, operation youth advantage, late night football, street football, street rugby and others that have been introduced in Scotland are all important in diverting young people away from crime and antisocial behaviour and in teaching them life skills and about rules, rights and responsibilities. There is no doubt that we have a role to play in that, but other agencies and, more important, communities, parents and other family members need to get involved in those activities.

Such investments are sound, but the fact is that, when these matters are under review or up for discussion, people look for what I would call soft targets. Nevertheless, these measures are essential in allowing the police to tackle the underlying causes of crime.

**Robert Brown:** Do you hold a different view, Mr Steele?

**Calum Steele:** Not fundamentally different—in any case, I am too young to have an old-fashioned view of anything.

The 1967 act enshrines the basic principles of policing, which are

“to guard, patrol and watch”

so as to prevent crime and, although the 2003 act was built on arguments about how to develop prevention, that very simple definition covers the current ambit of policing. As a result, it would be anomalous to revert to an old-fashioned stereotype of what we do just because we have got better at prevention.

It all comes back to the very essence of what a police officer does. Should police officers reassure and comfort our communities or should they come along when the wheels have come off the bogie, there is fighting in the streets and we want them to

take the bad man away? If the answer is the latter, the country is already lost and we might as well pack up and go home.

**Robert Brown:** I suspect that the community will be reassured by those answers but the underlying point seems to be the importance of deploying police officers on the street in a variety of different ways. I came across a report by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary from eight years ago that said that, at any one time, only 33 per cent of officers were available for deployment within a 24-hour period. I guess that, with the changes that have been introduced, that situation will have changed a bit in the intervening eight years. To what extent are you still dealing with issues such as court time and back-office functions being carried out by police officers rather than support staff and has there been any work to improve those figures?

**Chief Constable Strang:** Patrolling is important, but many other very important functions are not carried out by men and women in yellow jackets on the streets. For example, you will not see out in uniform the special branch officers who provide national security and safety and are involved in counterterrorism, while other officers are involved with online child protection and investigating computer crime.

However, you are right to say that we have identified certain areas where police officers' time is wasted. Court is a good example in that respect. I lead for ACPOS on criminal justice matters, and we are in dialogue with the Scottish Court Service, the Crown Office, the Scottish Prison Service and others in the system to find a way of making the criminal justice process more efficient. The greater use of videolinks has been suggested to ensure that court proceedings go ahead without having to transport prisoners from police stations to court and then to prison, and we are also looking at court scheduling and how court processes could be made more efficient and speeded up.

As part of our look at how we can deliver greater efficiencies, we are looking at a wide range of policing activities to see whether they can be done by others and whether we can reduce them. Court is certainly one of those.

**Robert Brown:** That is an interesting area. It would be useful and helpful to the committee if you could give us a written update on the progress that is being made there. Is that possible?

**Chief Constable Strang:** Yes, certainly. The work is being undertaken under the auspices of the justice outcomes group, which used to be the national criminal justice board. It is looking at making justice more effective and efficient.

**Robert Brown:** Are all the forces throughout Scotland equally prepared to face the budgetary

challenges? It is notable—Dave Thompson touched on this—that support staff numbers are going up in some areas and down in others. There appear to be different levels of preparedness. Can we be reassured that forces throughout Scotland are equally engaged in the exercise, and with considerable effect?

**Doug Cross:** I think that we can be reassured that every force and every police board will be fully engaged, and will have been for some time. They might be at different stages and they might have different issues to deal with, so the solutions might differ between forces in terms of the numbers of police staff and so on. However, every force finance officer I have spoken to has been able to provide the background to the efficiencies that they are looking at across the piece. A range of things are being considered, from reductions in allowances to overtime, non-staff-cost budgets and vacancy management, which we talked about earlier. The whole gamut of the police budget is being looked at.

It has been a relatively short period of time since a couple of Wednesdays ago when the budget settlement was announced, and that added an entirely different dimension to the financial planning. All the forces are heavily engaged with their constituent councils in work to prepare their budgets. As Mr Strang said earlier, the police boards and authorities will set their budgets in January.

**The Convener:** At this point, we will move on to shared services.

**Stewart Maxwell:** A number of panel members have already touched on the issue, but what progress is being made on shared services between police forces and between police forces and other public sector bodies? What savings do you expect to see in the coming year, 2011-12?

**Chief Constable Strang:** We already have the Scottish Police Services Authority and, for a long time, we have shared training at the Scottish Police College at Tulliallan. Information and communication technology has been a shared service since 2008. Forensic science is now a shared service under the SPSA, and the criminal justice information service is in one place. On the operational front, we have shared services such as the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency and the counterterrorism intelligence unit, and there is a major investigation, co-ordination and development unit. There are a number of operational units where we come together to do things once rather than eight times.

The efficiency and productivity steering group within ACPOS is looking at about 44 functions that might be seen as back-office functions, such as HR, finance, procurement and legal advice, and

which could be done once as opposed to eight times. I will ask Doug Cross to talk about the numbers on that.

On local shared services, all forces are looking at things that are geographically local, such as fleet maintenance, buildings and estate, and catering. It would not make sense for me, in Edinburgh, to share a service with the chief constable in Inverness, but it would be sensible to see what contracts the City of Edinburgh Council, West Lothian Council, Midlothian Council, East Lothian Council and Scottish Borders Council have for things such as buildings maintenance. I am in active dialogue with national health service and council chief executives to see what sort of back-office services we might share to deliver efficiency savings. A shining example is the West Lothian civic centre in Livingston, which houses not only the council headquarters but the divisional police headquarters for West Lothian, the procurator fiscal and the courts. By sharing that major building work, we have got better outcomes and efficiencies.

**Doug Cross:** As Mr Strang has said, there is quite a lot of activity going on both within the police service and with local authority partners, some of which is at an early stage. To make shared services truly effective, some up-front investment is likely required. There are usually infrastructure or ICT issues to be addressed to make the shared services work more effectively but, at present, the pump-priming funding for that is not available.

From a financial planning perspective, we do not expect a huge amount to come through in 2011-12 in relation to shared services, but we are planning for savings to come through in the later years of the spending review period—in years 2, 3 and 4. Opportunities will be taken. Mr Strang referred to the quad force work by the four forces in the east of Scotland. That will deliver efficiency and effectiveness savings through to next year, but not significant financial savings at this stage.

Mention has been made of the contribution and effectiveness of police staff at all levels within an organisation. We have had a look at some of the costs and do not get the sense that there are huge numbers in each of those areas. Calum Steele mentioned specific areas of human resources that have increased probably to keep pace with the increase in the number of staff and police officers over time. However, when we have looked across the piece at those back-office services, we have not seen a huge amount of fat sitting in each of those areas, so we do not expect significant savings to come from the back-office functions, although we must look at every aspect.

We already participate in all the purchasing consortia that we can, from the Home Office's

standing offer to Scotland Excel and all the framework contracts, whether for police uniforms or for police vehicles. We make significant savings through that and always look for further savings to be made in that way. However, the real savings will come in the areas that Mr Strang touched on—the operational shared services as opposed to the back-office side.

**Stewart Maxwell:** That is interesting. Your written submission states that the efficiency productivity steering group, which Mr Strang mentioned and to which you have alluded, “identified 23 support functions” but found that savings in those areas

“would be unlikely to make a significant contribution to the level of savings required.”

I have two questions about that. First, why is that the case? It seems to me that, leaving operational matters to the side for one moment, there is still plenty of scope for the sharing of support services not just within police forces but across the public sector as a whole. Mr Strang mentioned fleet management and buildings maintenance; Mr Steele mentioned diversity officers, communications and graphics. From my 10-plus years in Strathclyde fire service, I remember that each individual police force, fire service and ambulance service had all those departments and staffing. I am not saying that those services did not make a significant contribution to the organisations’ work, but if we are talking about the difference between what is essential and what is desirable, some of them must be discussed. I invite you to comment further on the issue, as it seems to me that there is still significant room for improvement.

11:15

You said that you are still at an early stage in developing shared services. That is a puzzling statement. When I joined Strathclyde fire service in 1992, we were discussing shared services and possible efficiencies in procurement and other areas. I imagine that the police were doing the exact same thing at the same time. I think that you are right when, 18 or 20 years later, you say that we are still at an early stage in making efficiencies and savings from shared services, but why is that the case?

**Doug Cross:** Although huge numbers of people may not be involved in the functions to which you refer, you are right to say that every area should be looked at. We have made the point that we will look at everything. We will look last at front-line staff, whether they be front-line police or police staff in front-line roles, whose absence would result in police officers being taken off front-line duties. As you suggest, we may find not that greater efficiencies are made, resulting in lower

costs, but that fewer things are done. Over the coming years, as the financial position gets tighter, we may have to accept a reduced service in some areas. Some functions come under great scrutiny from audit and other inspection bodies, but there may need to be a recognition that forces cannot cover all areas and that, consequently, there must be reductions.

Work has been done over a number of years to develop shared services. Tayside Police buys in a lot of services from local authorities and works collectively with other police forces. However, work to combine functions in their entirety across two or more forces, to meet the sort of financial targets that have been talked about, is at an early stage. For example, we do not have a shared HR or finance service across more than one force. We work with councils and others on each of those functions, but we have not reached the stage of sharing services. That is the work that is at an early stage.

**Chief Superintendent O’Connor:** The police service must look at every opportunity to share services with other blue-light emergency services, between forces and with local authorities. We must do that work here and now. We need to look at every opportunity to share services and to introduce collaborative arrangements, but boundary, border and structure issues must also be part of the debate. Will shared services free up sufficient efficiency savings, or must we look more widely at the strategic direction of policing and the public sector?

**Calum Steele:** David O’Connor makes a valid point about the issue of borders and boundaries. Each police force may be working with the local authorities within whose areas it operates, but there are opportunities for police officers in Nairn to get benefit from working with elements of the local authority in Elgin, given that they are cheek by jowl. The difficulty comes from the current mindsets in the police service. In the Highlands and Islands, the police share services with Orkney Islands Council, Shetland Islands Council, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and the Highland Council, but to gain the full benefit of what could be offered we must go beyond those areas.

**James Kelly:** Chief Constable Strang talked about the importance of ICT in the context of shared services. The Public Audit Committee has drawn our attention to Audit Scotland’s recent report, “The Scottish Police Services Authority”, which contained criticism of the SPSA for not being able to meet customers’ ICT needs. What improvements could the SPSA make to bring it more in tune with customers’ needs in relation to ICT and other areas? How could the SPSA be geared up to contribute more positively to the shared services agenda?

**Chief Constable Strang:** The SPSA is still a relatively new organisation—it is three years old. Some of its functions, such as the Scottish Police College and the SCDEA, were already shared services, and it has begun to bring together other services, such as forensic science and ICT. The report that you mentioned and the Scottish Government-funded review led to several recommendations on exactly the improvements that you asked about, which would make the authority responsive to customer needs. I think that mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that the SPSA is better aware of the demands of the eight forces on ICT and forensic science and across the range of services that they provide.

The challenge for the SPSA is that, historically, each force built up its ICT programme independently. That is how policing was; the notion that we should come together on business processes and efficiencies is relatively recent. The challenge is to have a programme of convergence so that we all end up using the same ICT system and being able to talk to one another. Of course, the bigger vision is that we should also be able to talk to other public authorities in Scotland.

I reassure you that I think that the action plans that were put in place following the two inspections will lead to the SPSA being more responsive to needs and will help it better to deliver what we need. Of course, the big question mark is to do with funding and whether the SPSA will have resources available to invest in ICT for the future.

**Nigel Don (North East Scotland) (SNP):** I thank the witnesses for their perseverance during the past hour and a quarter. I hope that I will not detain you for too long. The question that still worries me is what will happen towards the end of the financial year, when chief constables have to make their budgets balance but the many aspects that we talked about might not be converging on the number that you are looking for. Am I right in thinking that overtime is your last variable?

**Chief Constable Strang:** Overtime is certainly a variable and every force is looking to reduce its overtime spend. I hope that we would not get to the end of the financial year in the position that you described. We are planning for the financial year. In the past, the crude but effective mechanism that we have used for managing the budget is to do with recruitment; we do our projections, look at the profile and number of staff who are retiring and make a decision about recruiting. During the past four years we have been in the fortunate position of being able to increase numbers in all forces.

There is always a risk that there might be a major incident towards the end of a financial year. A major train crash or a multiple murder that must be investigated is expensive in overtime. However,

in the grand scheme of the budget, overtime will not break the bank at that stage, although it is one variable.

Every force has seen what is lying ahead and has built up reserves in 2010-11 as much as it could do. I think that that is why there has been the reduction in police support staff numbers that Mr Thompson mentioned. We are all trying to cut back on, for example, staff allowances, travelling, attendance on courses and overtime, as part of that.

**The Convener:** Cathie Craigie has a question—unless she feels that it has been answered.

**Cathie Craigie:** I think that it has been.

**Stewart Maxwell:** I have a small supplementary to Mr Don's question.

Mr Strang mentioned staff allowances at the end of his answer. There has been some media comment on a number of police officer allowances, particularly the housing allowance. Do you wish to comment on whether that should be part of the equation?

**Chief Constable Strang:** All staff conditions and allowances are negotiated through the Police Negotiating Board, which is a UK-wide organisation.

My view is that we are looking at everything. If we want to maintain front-line policing services, we need to look at where we can make efficiencies, so allowances must be looked at along with everything else.

**Stewart Maxwell:** Just out of fairness, I should find out the views of Mr O'Connor and Mr Steele.

**Calum Steele:** For me, the housing allowance and how it was reported in the press raised an obvious question: if the journalist is such a whizz at economics, why is he not working for the Parliament to try to solve the financial mess that we are in? It is a simple approach to take a particular allowance and, using a calculator, to multiply it by the number of police officers to make a determination about how many police officers could be saved, but the reality of the situation is somewhat different. There are, of course, legal issues.

The background to the abolition of the housing allowance in 1994 is that people who were already in the service would not get it increased, whereas those who came into the service subsequently would not get it at all. There was also the reasonable expectation that people would continue to get that income for the remainder of their service.

There are significant issues associated with anything on which someone's income is based—for example, the value of their mortgage. When

the allowances first came in, they were a sop to put up basic pay. The trade-off for those who came into the service after 1994 was the reduction in the number of points in the pay scale—when I joined the service, it was a 14-point pay scale—which meant that new entrants could increase their pensionable pay over the course of their career. That option was not available to those who had already entered the service.

Looking at small things in isolation will always make salacious headlines but, when we scratch the surface, we find a very shallow argument that does not do much to engender harmonious relationships between any of the staff associations and the chief constable.

**The Convener:** Mr O'Connor, I take it that you have no interest to declare on this matter. [Laughter.]

**Chief Superintendent O'Connor:** I agree with Calum Steele. We fully accept that we need to share the pain. Our pay and conditions are negotiated nationally and mandated through the PNB. We are moving into an arena in which there will be a pay freeze across the public sector and there could be increases in pension contributions for police officers, along with increases in VAT and a number of changes to taxation and the like, so it would not be appropriate or right to consider one matter in isolation.

**Stewart Maxwell:** I am sure that everyone on the committee will agree with me when I say to Mr Steele that we do not take what journalists write as always being truthful, accurate and helpful.

**The Convener:** Thank you all for coming. It has had to be a lengthy session because we face a fairly difficult economic situation and, like other budgets, the justice budget has taken a hit, so we require to go through it as thoroughly as we can.

What has emerged is that a lot of work has already been done in this area. I fully accept that the present circumstances did not arise on the watch of this morning's witnesses. It is perhaps a pity that in the years of plenty some thought was not given to going down the route that is now being considered.

It has been helpful for us to have been given such clear evidence, for which we are extremely grateful. We will have a brief suspension before we move to the next panel.

11:29

*Meeting suspended.*

11:32

*On resuming—*

**The Convener:** I welcome the second panel of witnesses: Sandy Riddell, chair of the criminal justice standing committee of the Association of Directors of Social Work; Bailie Helen Wright, chair of the community justice authorities conveners group; Jim Hunter, chief officer of north Strathclyde community justice authority; and Gillian Little, chief officer of Glasgow community justice authority.

I am sorry that you have been kept waiting this morning, but the previous evidence session was of considerable importance, as indeed is yours—although I am fairly certain that yours will not run on for so long. I understand that Bailie Wright would like to make a brief opening statement.

**Bailie Helen Wright (Community Justice Authorities Conveners Group):** Thank you for giving us the opportunity to give oral evidence on the costs of community sentences. The eight community justice authorities promote the development of community sentences both as an alternative to short-term prison sentences and as a rehabilitative order. We have supported the implementation of the community payback order and are currently working with our local authorities and other partners to ensure readiness for it coming on stream on 1 February next year.

The CJAs believe that the new order provides an opportunity to develop further confidence in the criminal justice system and in community orders in particular. We also welcome the opportunity that it provides for local consultation around the nature of unpaid work. We also believe that a single order will be much more easily understood by our communities than the previous arrangement.

The simultaneous introduction of CPOs and the presumption against short-term sentences makes it very difficult to predict sentencing patterns at this stage. Obviously, close monitoring of the implementation will be required to assess the increases.

**The Convener:** That is accepted. We will move to questions from Dave Thompson.

**Dave Thompson:** Good morning to you all and thanks very much for coming in today. The community justice budget got an increase of 0.7 per cent in cash terms, which is a real-terms reduction of 1.2 per cent. Given that around £6 million was put into that budget over the past year or so, what are the witnesses' views on its capacity to cope and deal with what is ahead in the next year?

**The Convener:** Mr Riddell, it might be appropriate if you began.

**Sandy Riddell (Association of Directors of Social Work):** Thank you very much and good morning.

The budget allocation is positive, in many respects, considering the difficult financial climate that we are in. However, the ADSW has a range of concerns in relation to the overall budget and the potential pressures. Our colleagues from the police raised a number of issues this morning that I will probably make links with.

The bottom line is that there has been an increase of approximately 4 per cent in the workload for criminal justice social work over the past five years. Over the past six years, there has been no inflationary increase in non-core funding, so different parts of the criminal justice system have been under a lot of pressure. The additional funding from the Government, which has been welcome, has enabled us to cope with some of the increases in workload.

My concern relates to the wider system. For CPOs to have a real impact, it will be important that everyone plays their part. The conversation that we heard earlier about whether to go back to core policing or do partnership work causes us real anxiety. When agencies try to square difficult financial circles, they tend to try to do that in isolation rather than in partnership. The crucial point is that a range of services that provide placements and additional support to try to turn offenders' lives around will all feel the need to pull back on budgets, so the financial position could cause a cumulative effect that will have an unfortunate outcome.

The Scottish Government will be working closely with the Scottish Court Service to monitor the number of orders that are made and the types of conditions that are attached to them. If the whole allocation is allocated, there will be no room for flexibility, depending on sentencing behaviour. For example, some parts of Scotland may have more CPOs than others, so the Scottish Government may be considering retaining some funding so that it has scope to redirect finance should certain parts of Scotland feel a huge pressure.

**The Convener:** That is clear.

**James Kelly:** As Mr Riddell noted, there has been a 4 per cent increase in the workload of community justice services in recent years, which has clearly put quite a bit of pressure on them.

I will ask specifically about the community payback orders under the Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010, which the Parliament passed in June. The presumption against short-term sentences comes into effect on 1 February next year. When that act was passed, the understanding was that between £6 million and £12 million would be required to fund the

measures—there are different figures, but I am using the Government's figures in the financial memorandum. That funding had not been budgeted for at the time, but the Government indicated that additional funding would be provided.

Bearing in mind that the community justice services budget has been cut by 1.2 per cent in real terms, what is your opinion of the view that, when the presumption comes into effect in February, there will be an increase in community payback orders but you will be left without appropriate funding to carry out the work?

**Jim Hunter (North Strathclyde Community Justice Authority):** The budget settlement that we received was far better than we had hoped for. Most community justice authorities and local authorities in Scotland had expected and been planning for a substantial cut in the budget, so the settlement was welcome.

In the past three years, we have received an additional £6 million to prepare for the implementation of community payback orders. That money has been guaranteed in the budget settlement, so we will continue to allocate those additional funds. However, as you rightly point out, there has been a real-terms reduction in the budget, which will present challenges not just to the community justice authorities but to our local authority partners and the third sector organisations that are working to support the implementation of CPOs.

Within the partnerships, the eight CJAs will review existing budget allocations and projects with a view to redirecting funds towards CPOs where possible. That process is under way in my authority, and so far we have identified two significant projects where we can divert resources from the existing budget to the CPO budget to help local authorities.

**The Convener:** We will follow up certain aspects of the resources for and availability of the new community orders with Cathie Craigie.

**Cathie Craigie:** Good morning, panel. Other members have mentioned the level of consideration that the committee gave to the evidence that we heard during the passage of the Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Bill. We heard from organisations such as yours that community payback orders would be difficult to deliver unless they were properly resourced. We concluded:

"CPOs will not deliver the benefits envisaged for them unless they are adequately resourced".

Are there sufficient resources in the budget settlement to make CPOs a success? My

colleague James Kelly reminded us all that they will come into force on 1 February 2011.

**The Convener:** Mr Riddell, will you open on that? We will then go to Mr Hunter. It is an important point.

**Sandy Riddell:** Okay, convener. I think that some of what Mr Hunter has already said partly answers the question. A number of developments are being progressed with the CJAs, the ADSW, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Government that we hope will release some capacity in existing finances. That will be important. For example, the new criminal justice social inquiry reports will be much shortened for more minor cases, which will release some time to deal with more complex cases. However, there are issues about progress courts and whether they will be for everyone or for the critical few, and there are issues about 16 and 17-year-olds who will require supervision, which will also create an additional workload.

Earlier, our police colleagues mentioned the continuing work that is being done behind the scenes on court scheduling, the electronic transfer of requests for reports, and videoconferencing, all of which might release some capacity. On the other hand, a lot of intensive resourcing is required to support the process of working with other agencies on the more robust risk assessment for higher-tariff offenders. We need to ensure that all the various aspects that are being progressed begin to realise some benefits and release capacity within the existing resources for staff to address some of the demand.

**Cathie Craigie:** When we considered the bill, the committee was concerned to ensure that, when a community payback order was handed down, the individual would be able to access appropriate programmes quickly and the required supervision and monitoring are in place. We thought that that would have a major impact on the budget, and people told us that the resources would have to be in place. Given what you have said, are you confident that you are getting enough resources to be able to act quickly and provide appropriate programmes?

11:45

**Sandy Riddell:** It comes back to my earlier point about the impact on the ability of other agencies and third sector organisations to provide vital services to deal with, for example, substance misuse, employment and health matters. The question is whether those complementary but supporting services will still be there to enable us to respond with interventions that are appropriate and tailored to the offender's needs, that take place at the right time, as quickly as possible and

with the maximum effect, and that might reduce the cycle of reoffending.

**Jim Hunter:** Mr Kelly is right to suggest that the upward pressure on workload will come from the presumption against short sentences. Such a move must surely have an impact on reducing the short-term prison population, which will convert into a rise in the number of community orders.

Before last week, we were in something of a dark void. Now that we know our budget, we can work in real terms, plan for the increasing workload and try to find additional funding within existing resources. We can do that, but of course we do not yet know by how much the number of orders will increase. If the increase is significant, we might well struggle to fund CPOs properly, but if it is within the 10 per cent range set out in the financial memorandum to the Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Bill, we should be able to fund them within existing resources.

**Cathie Craigie:** Have you discussed with ministers the introduction of CPOs in February? Is there any leeway if you find that the budget does not cover the number of orders that you have to deal with?

**Jim Hunter:** As Mr Riddell made clear, from June, July or August next year, when the courts will start making CPOs, we will have to monitor closely the number of orders and where they are coming from. Although the pressure will come from the presumption against short sentences, we will have to keep our eye on justice of the peace courts, which will be able to make an order that they could not previously access. We will also need to work closely with the local authorities and the Scottish Government if we are to be able to switch resources to areas that become hot spots.

**Nigel Don:** After spending some time in Aberdeen with those who were managing community service orders, I came to the conclusion that it would have made no difference to running costs if the work party that I saw had had six rather than four lads, and it might be argued on occasion that a small increase in numbers might make very little difference to your costs. Of course, if the maximum in a work party were six and a seventh person were suddenly added, the reverse problem could arise. Is there any scope to increase numbers without adding significantly to costs, or is the reality that when everything is added up an increase in numbers always means an increase in costs?

**Gillian Little (Glasgow Community Justice Authority):** There is an issue with regard to capacity, but we need to remember that the unpaid work element is not the only component of a CPO and that the other requirements must be equally well resourced. That is where the wider

alliance of partners comes into play, and the fact is that the pressures that they will face will also impact on us. Health services, for example, will be crucial in delivering requirements with regard to mental health.

In planning for the CPO—which, I point out, is a single order, not the range of orders that we previously had—all local authorities are looking at their internal structures. The element of structural change that will be required as well as savings generated from the on-going review of non-core services and core business will, as Jim Hunter suggests, help to get us some way towards having the capacity to meet the 10 per cent increase in orders.

**Robert Brown:** I want to pursue the issue of the current position and the need for the new one. Perhaps I will direct this to Gillian Little, now that you have come into the discussion. Can you give us a flavour of how in the biggest authority—Glasgow City Council—the money for community sentences is being spent on the ground and what changes there might be in how it will be spent in the forthcoming financial year, with the Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010 coming into force?

**Gillian Little:** You would probably be best talking to local government colleagues about the nuts and bolts of how money is spent on the ground. However, the community justice budget is split into core and non-core elements, with the core element focused on the staffing and resource to deliver court reports and the supervision of offenders. In Glasgow, we also have a commission service to deliver the unpaid work squads—that varies across the country. We have a non-core budget that also supports the provision of support and supervision to offenders—the rehabilitative elements—including a supported accommodation budget, a drugs court that provides intensive drug treatment testing, and a dedicated resource for women offenders in the city, the 218 project.

In terms of changes, we are seeing criminal justice and social work departments as part of wider local authority departments looking at structural change. For example, in Glasgow we are moving from a structure of five area delivery mechanisms to three, which we hope will streamline some of the management processes and allow us to have more staff focused on delivering supervision and delivering services to courts. That is one local example of how that change is working through to manage, we hope, the transition to the CPO come February.

**Robert Brown:** Just to develop that point a little bit, some of the organisations involved are from the voluntary sector. I know, for example, that the Glasgow north-west women's group takes one or

two community service order people at the moment. Obviously, there is personal flexibility there, which is useful. Is resource put into that, or are those things done by arrangement? How do you deal with outside providers in that regard?

**Gillian Little:** There is a mixed economy, if you like, of squad placements. Some are commissioned from larger organisations with paid supervisors, and individual personal placements are supervised within local community groups. Those arrangements have been built up over the years. There is a range of providers across the city with very close links into teams. We want to build on both of those elements, because we realise that in working with offenders, one size does not fit all. We want to be able to get people into meaningful placements to do meaningful jobs, which we hope will lead to positive outcomes for both the community, in terms of payback, and the individuals themselves. We want to maintain that and grow it.

**Robert Brown:** Mr Riddell, do you want to add anything? Can you comment on the question of the rehabilitative bits, which is not exactly a novel but an enhanced feature of the new CPOs to deal with drug addiction problems, literacy problems or whatever is part of the orders?

**Sandy Riddell:** Gillian Little has put it very well. What is happening in Glasgow happens to a greater or lesser extent throughout the country. Over the years, a range of extremely good services has been developed not just with other statutory partners but in the voluntary sector. On a whole range of issues, such as mental health, employability and substance misuse in particular, there are extremely useful services that work very closely with criminal justice. As I have said already, there are concerns about the ability of those organisations—or some of them, at least—to continue, because funding does not simply come from criminal justice, social work or community justice authorities; it comes from a variety of sources, many of which are beginning to feel the financial squeeze, so being able to sustain, plan and manage those services in the medium to longer term is very challenging. Particularly when you cannot forecast far enough ahead, it is very difficult to protect some of the services.

Various things are being done at, for example, local authority level. I suppose that we will come to this later in relation to shared services or different configurations of services. In my local authority, much work is being done on having many connections between criminal justice services, alcohol and drug services—which also involve the health service—and youth justice, because we need to ensure that service connections for an awful lot of youngsters who are coming through

the system are made strategically and operationally. That reduces back-office and managerial costs, which means that funding can be redirected to commissioning complementary services that support work that is being done.

**Robert Brown:** The committee will take notice of your warning about wider revenue streams. At the other end, all the work is predicated on success in reducing reoffending rates. I think that I am right in saying that we have been told that the reoffending rate for some community orders is about 42 per cent; the potential to knock that down a bit is manifest. What evaluation is taking place of the effectiveness of spending by community justice authorities on such measures? It is arguable that services are patchy across the country and that practices differ. Are we looking at what works best and what change gets the best bang for our buck?

**Bailie Wright:** The situation is different in each of the eight CJA areas, as we deal with local issues in different ways. However, we have held several events, and conveners and chief officers come together regularly with Scottish Government civil servants to keep ourselves up to speed with what is happening. Sharing good practice is one element of that—we have started to do that in some of the Scottish Government management of offenders groups. There is a lot of good practice out there. If something is working in another area, we certainly want it in our area.

**Sandy Riddell:** That is extremely important. Nationally, lessons are being learned and good practice is being shared. In the northern community justice authority, performance and outcomes are scrutinised closely. That raises issues, such as why results in one part of a CJA's area differ slightly from those in another part, which leads to healthy debate. That has influenced and shaped some service developments that have taken place since the northern CJA was established.

Performance and the evaluation of whether we have had a good result from investment are also scrutinised by council service committees. We do that in Moray. The same figures that go to the CJA go to councillors for challenge and scrutiny, and they go not only to the health and social care services committee but to our audit and performance review committee.

At different levels—national, CJA and local—debate and close scrutiny of performance take place, and whether the work can be done better and more effectively is challenged.

**Robert Brown:** What happens nationally? How are evaluations and comparisons of authorities done? What information do you have to provide?

**Jim Hunter:** No arrangement is in place for national scrutiny. However, earlier this year, we put the case to Audit Scotland for it to audit the value for money of the eight community justice authorities and the grant allocation. Audit Scotland accepted that case, but the audit is not in next year's audit programme—it is likely to be done in subsequent years; it is on the list. That might give us a start at comparing the eight community justice authorities and their different practices.

**Robert Brown:** What is the reason for not doing the audit next year? Is it that the new orders will be introduced, so the situation will be allowed to settle down, or does it relate to a budgetary and timing issue of no principal significance?

**Jim Hunter:** The case that we put to Audit Scotland was that doing the audit next year would be good from our point of view, because we will have been established for five years and will be pretty settled organisations—our arrangements are pretty much in place, settled, tested and reviewed. We wished the audit to happen next year, but the decision was for Audit Scotland—I assume that the decision related to other burdens in its programme.

12:00

**The Convener:** It could be that Audit Scotland wants to see how the new legislation beds in before it carries out the audit, which would be fairly logical.

Finally, James Kelly has a couple of questions.

**James Kelly:** Looking at next year, you will face a number of challenges. There will be a real-terms reduction in the budget, efficiency savings will have to be delivered, and the number of CPOs will increase as a result of new legislation. Can you meet all those challenges without harming service delivery?

**Bailie Wright:** That is a difficult question, because there is no precedent on which to base our prediction. However, as CJAs we have signed up to that and we will make it work. We are ready.

I am sorry; what was the second part of your question?

**James Kelly:** You will face three major challenges next year. Can you do all the work that you do and deal with the budget being tightened, the increase in the number of CPOs and making efficiency savings without harming any of the areas of the service that you currently provide?

**Bailie Wright:** As I said, we are up for trying. In certain areas, some CJAs might have serious problems with the budget.

Not all of our projects cost a lot of money. A small project was done in a small shopping centre,

and the centre paid for the paint and people on community service did the painting, so the only cost was for supervision. That was just a small project; there are projects that cost a lot more.

I am not sure if I am giving you the right answers, but we will make it work.

**James Kelly:** Okay. Obviously, the budgets are going to be challenging. Do you anticipate any job losses? If so, can the jobs be lost without recourse to compulsory redundancies?

**Jim Hunter:** I can make a start with that. I do not think that anyone wants to see compulsory redundancies in any of the CJAs, local authorities or wider partnerships. When we review and restructure services, everything will be done to avoid compulsory redundancies, although there will probably be opportunities to save money through natural wastage and staff turnover during the three years.

If they have not already done so, the CJAs will begin to review structures, and that will result in a reduction in the number of posts. There is no doubt about that. It will affect not just the statutory organisations but some of the third sector partners that we work with and allocate funding to. I do not think that anyone wants to go down the road of compulsory redundancies, and I do not believe that they will be necessary, given the normal turnover of staff that we experience.

**The Convener:** Does anyone have a contrary view? Mr Riddell, you have a view, but it might not be contrary.

**Sandy Riddell:** No, it is not contrary. I can add a bit to that. My anxiety was slightly echoed by our police colleagues on the previous panel. Because of the budgetary situation, local authorities and their partners are looking at what is strictly essential in statutory terms. The upstream preventive work is important, particularly for youth crime and other facets of the community justice system, and if it is pared back, there will be a double whammy in relation to trying to deliver CPOs. A lot of people will come into the system who would have been supported more appropriately at an earlier stage, and some services will not be around to support people in chronic need, which means that the scope of what criminal justice social work can do will be much more limited.

We at local government and CJA level need to ensure that the wider strategic connections are as robust as possible, otherwise things will not happen, and the detail of services will falter.

**The Convener:** Do you have anything to say in conclusion, Bailie Wright?

**Bailie Wright:** It is difficult to be sure that there is sufficient money at this stage. It is like asking,

how long is a piece of string? It depends upon whether sentencers use CPOs.

As far as the Scottish Prison Service is concerned, we hope to have some resource transfer. If fewer people go to prison, we will have to deal with them in the community, and we will need trained staff who are ready to go.

**The Convener:** I thank you, Bailie Wright, and your colleagues for coming this morning, and for giving your answers thoroughly and clearly. It is greatly appreciated, and will help the committee in its deliberations. Thank you very much indeed.

The committee will now move into private session.

12:06

*Meeting continued in private until 13:03.*



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

Members who wish to suggest corrections for the revised e-format edition should mark them clearly in the report or send it to the Official Report, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP.

#### PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES

##### OFFICIAL REPORT daily editions

*Single copies: £5.00*

*Meetings of the Parliament annual subscriptions: £350.00*

##### WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS weekly compilation

*Single copies: £3.75*

*Annual subscriptions: £150.00*

Available in e-format only. Printed Scottish Parliament documentation is published in Edinburgh by RR Donnelley and is available from:

#### Scottish Parliament

**All documents are available on the Scottish Parliament website at:**

**[www.scottish.parliament.uk](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk)**

For more information on the Parliament, or if you have an inquiry about information in languages other than English or in alternative formats (for example, Braille, large print or audio), please contact:

#### Public Information Service

The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

**Telephone: 0131 348 5000**

**Fòn: 0131 348 5395** (Gàidhlig)

**Textphone users** may contact us on **0800 092 7100**.

We also welcome calls using the Text Relay service.

**Fax: 0131 348 5601**

**E-mail: [sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk)**

We welcome written correspondence in any language.

#### Blackwell's Scottish Parliament Documentation

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

#### Telephone orders and inquiries

**0131 622 8283 or**

**0131 622 8258**

#### Fax orders

**0131 557 8149**

**E-mail orders, subscriptions and standing orders**  
**[business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk](mailto:business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk)**

#### Blackwell's Bookshop

**53 South Bridge  
Edinburgh EH1 1YS  
0131 622 8222**

#### Blackwell's Bookshops:

243-244 High Holborn  
London WC1 7DZ  
Tel 020 7831 9501

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

#### Accredited Agents

(see Yellow Pages)

and through other good booksellers

e-format first available  
ISBN

Revised e-format available  
ISBN 978-0-85758-231-7