



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday 25 April 2012

Wednesday 25 April 2012

CONTENTS

	Col.
DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE	903
PUBLIC SERVICES REFORM AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT: STRAND 1 (PARTNERSHIPS AND OUTCOMES)	904
SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION.....	945
Town and Country Planning (Continuation in force of Local Plans) (Highland) (Scotland) Order 2012 (SSI 2012/90)	945

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE
10th Meeting 2012, Session 4

CONVENER

*Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee City West) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)

*Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab)

*Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con)

*John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Bob Christie (Improvement Service and National Community Planning Group)

Derek Mackay (Minister for Local Government and Planning)

Professor Fiona Mackenzie (National Community Planning Group)

David Martin (SOLACE Scotland and National Community Planning Group)

Mark McAteer (Improvement Service)

Lewis Ramsay (National Community Planning Group)

Assistant Chief Constable Bill Skelly (National Community Planning Group)

Councillor Pat Watters (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Eugene Windsor

LOCATION

Committee Room 6

Scottish Parliament

Local Government and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday 25 April 2012

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 09:46*]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Joe FitzPatrick): Good morning. I welcome everyone to the 10th meeting in 2012 of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee. As usual, I ask everyone to ensure that mobile phones and so on are switched off.

Our first item of business is to agree to take items 4 and 5 in private. Are we agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Public Services Reform and Local Government: Strand 1 (Partnerships and Outcomes)

09:47

The Convener: Our next item of business is our final oral evidence-taking session for our inquiry into public services reform and local government: strand 1 (partnerships and outcomes).

I welcome to the meeting the first of our two panels of witnesses: Derek Mackay, the Minister for Local Government and Planning, and Councillor Pat Watters, the president of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. As this might well be Councillor Watters's final outing to the Scottish Parliament after years of service to local government, I put on record my appreciation of the contribution that he has made in that time.

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): Hear, hear.

The Convener: Before we move to formal questions, I offer the panel members the opportunity to make an opening statement.

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay): Thanks, convener. I welcome this opportunity to join the president of COSLA to speak to the committee about its inquiry, which, as you will know, is running simultaneously with the work on community planning and single outcome agreements that we are carrying out in response to the Christie commission's request for a review of community planning. The Scottish Government and its partners take the matter very seriously, which is why we have carried out a joint review, co-chaired by me as Minister for Local Government and Planning and Pat Watters as president of COSLA. We had an officer support group and there was a lot of engagement with partners working through Government and local government to produce a way forward for community planning. As that work moves forward, things continue to emerge.

We want to create a community planning framework that brings all parts of the public sector together to focus on outcomes and achieve the better Scotland to which we all aspire. The Government's response to Christie and our whole focus on community planning are based on the four pillars of reform—prevention, integration, workforce development and improved performance—and they have very much been the driving force behind the review.

A really important part of the review is the document "Community Planning Review—Statement of Ambition", which describes how community planning should look in the future,

including the introduction of more hard-edged single outcome agreements that will make a difference in local communities. The statement of ambition sought to ensure that we addressed a number of issues that your committee and other committees have raised about all the public sector working not only together but with the third sector and other partners, and it is with a sense of reassurance and excitement that we have established the statement and its framework as we head into the local government elections.

The elections present a window of opportunity to give new administrations across the country a framework and a fresh start with regard to community planning, more focused single outcome agreements and a radical new way of working to ensure that every element of the public sector is focused on delivering on outcomes. I hope that we are achieving that aim through our partnership approach, which has been absolutely fundamental to community planning and the review that the president of COSLA and I have conducted.

Councillor Pat Watters (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities): I do not disagree with anything that Derek Mackay has said. It has long been local government's view that, given the financial circumstances that the public sector in Scotland faces now and into the future, we must radically change service delivery. We have never felt that structural change was the only option available to the public sector in Scotland; we believe in better integration of services, which is why we welcome the opportunity to review community planning and to think about how we might reshape it to meet communities' needs now and into the future.

We think that the public sector will be in this financial situation for quite some time and community planning gives us the chance to have better integration and service delivery and to make an impact on communities. We are not saying that so that people do not bother us and just leave us to get on with things—we actually believe that it is important both to value and evaluate outcomes in communities, and I am very pleased that the Accounts Commission has come on board to look at how we might do that. We are very relaxed about the review and very happy to be part of it.

The Convener: To date, most of our witnesses have agreed that it would be beneficial to extend the community planning duty to other public sector partners instead of simply confining it to local government. What are your views on that?

Derek Mackay: You are absolutely right to suggest that that issue is emerging and that there is a universal belief that extending the legal duty will lead to strong and meaningful community planning and help to drive the integration, respect

and co-ordination required to meet the current financial circumstances, deal with the need for change and tackle the challenges that need to be addressed. As a result, the Government is considering the request to extend the legal duty to all public sector partners. I am sure, convener, that you would not want me to make an announcement that might upset people, but the issue is very much being considered; indeed, the forthcoming community empowerment and renewal bill could be used to deliver in that respect.

As I said, you are absolutely right to say that there has been a universal request for the duty to go further than local government—after all, community planning is about not just local government but all public sector partners—and we are listening very sympathetically to that case.

Councillor Watters: Despite the lack of legislation, community planning partnerships have been a success. Can we improve them? Yes, and the aim of the review is to ensure that every part of the public sector buys into that view. We have had discussions with the minister about how what has been suggested might be done, and the Government is very sympathetic to the notion of looking at how it might be done in future.

It needs to be recognised that no part of the public sector, whether the Government, health or whatever, can deliver any of this on its own. In fact, I am telling you right now that local government cannot do so; we can do it only through partnership, and if that requires a further look at how we might get the partnerships to work properly I am sure that the Government will take that suggestion on board.

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): What, in your view, are the main barriers to better partnership working and integration of partners in the community planning process?

Councillor Watters: In my view, good work is being done and good relationships exist between partners. I would like community planning partnerships to set priorities at the local level rather than their bringing to the table priorities that they have set earlier. We are trying to achieve a situation in which people come to the community planning partnerships, set the priorities for the area and then put resources in to achieve solutions for those priorities.

Early intervention is about preventing the symptoms instead of curing a problem once it has actually happened. If early intervention can do that, it will make a difference in our communities in the future. We can throw resources at a problem once it exists but we need to prevent the problem from arising in the first place, and that is about better integration.

People come to the table with ready-made plans and if some bits fit, that is fair enough. However, instead of doing that, they should be asking what the priorities are for the area and how we can get together to solve the problems jointly. We need to start from a different standpoint, rather than just coming along and saying, "Well, this is what we're doing."

James Dornan: Before I get the minister's answer, I will just come back on that. You are saying that local priorities should take precedence over a ready-made solution. How do you identify those local priorities? Would the community do that? I have been to some community planning partnerships and it seems that the decisions are already made before they get to the community representatives. Are you suggesting that the approach should be much more bottom-up than top-down?

Councillor Watters: Certainly. I am not saying that there should not be any national priorities, but that national priorities should fit with local priorities and there should be joint working to achieve them. There will always be a need to set national priorities to go by. However, as with anything else, what is a priority in Glasgow is not necessarily a priority in Elgin—they do not have the same priorities. We should be setting the national priorities but not telling local authorities how they get there because each local authority will be different. We should not be trying to focus people or corral them into delivery methods. That is why I argue that ring fencing is not the way to go; it is wasteful rather than being a solution to problems.

Derek Mackay: I have seen that from the evidence that many people have given the committee about the silo mentalities, departmentalism and protectionism that might exist in some parts of the public sector. Those are barriers to integration, joint working and the focus on outcomes. There are a few ways in which community planning can help to address that.

The first is to do with responsibility. People might feel that it is their responsibility to meet their own objectives. For example, health will feel responsible for health improvement, efficiency, access and treatment targets, and local government will feel responsible for its statutory indicators. In other parts of the public sector, the police might feel more responsible for crime statistics, for example. A real sense of joint ownership of all the community planning partnership's objectives will breed a feeling of joint responsibility for tackling those issues together. That might mean further integration of projects, spending or energy and effort to achieve outcomes and overcome the historical silo mentality that might have existed or what have been perceived as organisational barriers.

A strong message is coming out about partnership. Officers from all those organisations have been involved in the review and they all get that we must work together to overcome the structural boundaries that people perceive and to identify and address all the outcomes on which we must work together.

Before I became a minister, I was on the Finance Committee when it focused on prevention. I clearly remember the Auditor General saying that there is sometimes too much sensitivity around organisational boundaries and who is responsible for what. As long as organisations are accountable and transparent and have sound financial management, they can work together quite creatively to address issues. Some of the boundaries that people think are there are only perceptions; they are not legal, debilitating barriers to achieving joint working. Integration can be achieved more enthusiastically than has been happening.

In the past, many community planning partnerships have shared good projects rather than genuinely assessing the needs of the community and working together to resolve the problems. We can point to a few co-locations as good examples of project-itis: the partners might have worked together, but did they genuinely come together as leaders of public sector organisations to make a difference? In some cases, however positive those relationships were, they did not.

10:00

There must be a step change in community planning so that the standard is consistent throughout the country. All public sector partners must enthusiastically embrace the agenda in the statement of ambition and in the frameworks, and ensure that they bring together the full force of their organisations to make a change in their communities through integration, improved performance and a focus on place and prevention like we have never seen before.

The rules will be flexible enough for them to achieve that. There will not be a top-down approach: the approach should be organic and come from local communities. We will use the best practice—we know that there is much good practice out there—to ensure that any barriers that people believe exist are removed. For the avoidance of doubt, each part of the public sector is an equal partner in making community planning work, which is a step change from how we have done business before.

Kevin Stewart: I declare for the last time at this committee an interest as a member of Aberdeen City Council, and I welcome the witnesses.

We have heard about the possible extension of the legal duty, and we have spoken to many witnesses about incorporation, but we have not seen any CPPs become incorporated. Will that still stand? What do you think of incorporation?

Derek Mackay: If we become too obsessed with the legal structure of community planning partnerships, we might miss the point.

The potential for a community planning partnership to work depends on each of the partners—each leader in the public sector—bringing their organisation with them. They must unite behind the objectives of a community planning vision in each area and the objectives in the single outcome agreements, which we hope will be available after the new administrations are in place and have created new agreements.

We do not require incorporation or community planning partnerships to be delivery bodies. If they are working effectively as a board and as a collection of public sector leaders, with each partner delivering individually and collectively, the legal structure is not the big issue. The change maker will not be the structure, but what the partners in community planning partnerships actually do.

The partnerships can continue to work as a collection of leaders that are setting out their ambitions, being responsible and accountable for what partners are doing and setting out a vision for and understanding a particular area. However, there will still be lead partners in the community planning partnership—whether that is local government, health, the police or others—in commissioning and leading work. We do not necessarily need a new organisational structure in community planning partnerships to achieve the objectives.

Councillor Watters: I agree with that. Our view is not that any particular part of the public sector is making a play to take over other parts, but that we must try to work together better to deliver on agreed priorities at the local level. If people come to the table with that in mind, there is no need for that further step. There would be a greater level of bureaucracy and a fear among every community planning partner that somebody else was taking over. In local government, for example, we would see our democratic role in communities or in health being taken over and influenced.

There is an opportunity for community planning partnerships to influence rather than control the budgets for the whole public sector in order to deliver better outcomes for the local community. That is not a takeover: it involves using co-operation and influence to have an impact on the priorities that are set.

Kevin Stewart: Will the extension of the legal duty help to resolve some of the difficulties that exist? Some organisations and third sector partners have said that the entire thing is dominated by local government.

Derek Mackay: There might be something in what the member suggests; after all, public sector leaders will say in response to politicians and others that meeting their legal requirements is their number 1 priority.

However, the legal duty aside, the tools already exist for community planning partners to work together effectively as equals. We want all new administrations, irrespective of which party is in control, to embrace this window of opportunity to redefine, renew, refocus and reinvigorate their vision, their single outcome agreements and CPPs to ensure that they rise to the challenge. The statutory duty is not really required to achieve that aim; we can get on with this with the tools that we have and, as part of the further work that we will carry out as we move into the new arrangements for local government, we want to provide as much support as we can. There is no reason why community planning cannot get on with doing the great work that can be done with the best practice that already exists.

On the question of what incorporation might look like with regard to CPPs, the current arrangements give enough freedom to allow the public sector to work together. For example, the members of a partnership could have discussions about greater integration of services right now; indeed, the pace of change could be very fast after May once the new administrations are in office, irrespective of who is in power. After all, good practice, great examples and a willingness to move forward already exist. Even if the legislative basis for community planning were to be changed, we would not have to wait for that change to be implemented; we can start to make changes now. Indeed, we sense from the partners who have worked together on the review a real willingness to do that, particularly with regard to the absolutely crucial issues of place and prevention.

Councillor Watters: First of all, we should look at the history of CPPs. They were introduced very quickly in 2008; there had been discussions with both the previous and present Governments on the matter and, like the Government, we were very keen for them to be brought in. However, for the first year, we were only playing at it. As only local government had any legal responsibility, it dominated the partnerships—or it certainly felt like that to other partners, some of whom were reluctant to come to the table. I do not think that that is the case any more. There is a willingness to be involved, and that is going to drive the whole thing forward. The minister has indicated that, if

that willingness is not enough to deliver what we need and if something else is required, the Government is willing to consider that in future.

Kevin Stewart: The committee hears a lot about best practice—and, indeed, has seen best practice in certain places—but never seems to hear a huge amount about things going wrong. I agree with the minister's comment that we must ensure that folk get this but how do we ensure that the best practice that is going on across the country and which works and is sustainable—and not the project-itis that the minister mentioned—gets exported to the rest of the country? How do we let others know what possible failures to avoid?

Derek Mackay: First of all, partners and organisations such as the Improvement Service and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers have to share good practice. They already do so and I am sure that you will hear from them shortly on how they ensure that that happens.

The more important question is how we address less-than-good practice. When I visit CPPs, I, like committee members, am told that relationships are perfect and everything is working well. However, that cannot universally be the case. People have a good story to tell but, in order to ensure a degree of national consistency in that good practice, the new arrangements will contain some mechanism for overseeing CPPs. We are still working on the detail in that respect, and we will give CPPs more advice on the matter.

The crucial thing about CPPs is that, because locally elected members and community organisations including the third sector—and indeed the third sector interface—serve on them, they are locally and democratically accountable. Of course, there are challenges in relation to how representative CPPs actually are, but the fact is that they have democratic input. Given the move towards joint responsibility and leadership and the renewed and reinvigorated focus on CPPs, I am sure that those that are performing slightly less well than the others will want to up their game and meet the new standard. They will certainly be expected to do so.

The prize of good community planning is better services, better joint working and a real focus on outcomes that make a difference rather than simply heading towards financial difficulties, poor performance and continually having to address problems instead of preventing them through preventative measures. That prize is so great that I am sure that CPPs will want to emulate best practice across the country.

Councillor Watters: Local government and the rest of the public sector have completely bought into the community planning review. However, this

is just the start; it is not the end of the process. As fewer and fewer resources become available, we will have to continually review the matter to ensure that we are getting outcomes that make a difference in and protect communities and, as I said, this is just the start of our journey towards meaningful early intervention measures and improved outcomes in communities. We will be able to evaluate how those outcomes are improving the lives of communities in Scotland.

Kevin Stewart is absolutely right to suggest that there have been both excellent and very mediocre examples of community planning, but we now have a commitment from and willingness by community planning partners to drive things forward and make a difference in communities.

John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab): There is a real awareness among public sector bodies that remaining in a silo is no longer a way forward—indeed, there is a willingness to move away from that position—and I welcome the statement of ambition that the Scottish Government and COSLA have produced. That said, some conflict remains over budgets and other matters. The statement of ambition says quite clearly:

“The CPP must ensure that the SOA is resourced: partners must contribute appropriately”.

Does that mean that budgets must be shared? To what extent is that a change to the current arrangements?

Derek Mackay: We are not going to set any magic formula or rigid regime for funding community planning. As I have said, we will not present some top-down checklist setting out how community planning must be carried out; after all, that is not the spirit behind it. It will work well only if it is done at a local level. That said, each local CPP should be properly resourced. As I am sure the member is aware, all the money that used to be tied up in previous ring-fenced commitments and direct funding for the previous community planning arrangements was rolled into the local government settlement and we no longer have specific budget lines for specific elements of community planning—or, indeed, for community planning itself. Nevertheless, public sector partners have the funding to make community planning work.

I point out that it will not just be the servicing or administration of CPPs that will make the difference. That is taken as read and should happen anyway. Instead, the expectation is that the massive multibillion pound investment that public sector partners are making will be focused on addressing outcomes that make the biggest difference and that those partners will properly and professionally resource community planning. The

big prize is to ensure that all aspects of public sector spend are focused on the outcomes that, in his role on this committee—and indeed in his previous role on the Finance Committee—Mr Pentland would want us to address through, for example, prevention.

10:15

Councillor Watters: Let me give the example of a community planning partnership that is looking at community safety. Although community safety can be about policing, it is not just a matter for the police—it is a matter for the whole partnership. It can be about the local environment and landscaping, about whether there is proper street lighting or extreme poverty in the area, and about whether we need more emphasis on youth unemployment to tackle the problems. It is a multi-agency approach. It is not just about saying that we have X amount of budget to spend but about identifying a problem and getting the commitment from the partners to say, “What can you bring to the table to try and solve it?” It is about ensuring that the partners direct part of their budget to the problem to ensure that a solution is found and that there is better integration in tackling problems. Rather than saying that community safety is a police matter, partners should be saying that it is a matter for the whole partnership to tackle, because it is multifaceted. It is not just about whether there is crime in the area but about what is causing the crime. Is it bad lighting or poor infrastructure? Is there real poverty or a lot of unemployment in the area? Do we need to take a multi-agency approach? If so, how do we do that? What is important is that we get the outcomes at the end of the day.

John Pentland: You spoke earlier about the public sector buying in. Another big sector out there is the third sector. In previous evidence, we heard from third sector representatives that they see themselves only as consultees. Do you share that view, or do you see the third sector as a real partner?

Councillor Watters: I was a member of the Christie commission, which took lots of evidence from the public sector. Influential people from the third sector were members of the commission. It is vital that community planning partners take on board, realistically, the third sector and what it can bring to the table. The third sector plays a major role in communities. We need to encourage and develop that and ensure that we get the third sector on board when we are doing that. The only way of getting the third sector on board is by ensuring that it is a full member of the partnership and not just a consultee.

It will be vital that we get the private sector involved as well, and look at how we develop our

relationship with that sector. I see that improvement not as an add-on, but as a vital part of the whole mechanism.

Derek Mackay: I absolutely agree. The third sector should not just be a passenger on this journey—it should be an active participant in it and an equal member. In many of the best community planning partnerships, the third sector is a member at the most senior strategic level. Senior local figures of third sector organisations are often in the officer group.

Of course, the difficulty is whether one person can truly represent the entire sector, as it is so diverse. Arrangements must be in place to ensure that the full spectrum of the local third sector is represented in the community planning partnership. There is a real role there to ensure that there is proper engagement, inclusion and feedback. On agendas such as prevention, third sector involvement will be crucial.

Pat Watters is correct on the involvement of the private sector. How can we solve an issue such as youth unemployment without having the private sector at the table, helping us to plan a way forward? There should be a greater role for the third sector and the private sector, while recognising that it is difficult to be truly representative. In the single interface for the third sector, we will at least have an organisation and a person who is largely responsible for the third sector in that area. There are opportunities there to ensure that the third sector feels engaged in a way that it has perhaps not felt in the past.

The Convener: We heard evidence last week from ethnic minorities and other minorities about engagement. Do panel members have any thoughts about how we can ensure that when we are talking about community, we are talking about the whole community?

Derek Mackay: Local authorities and others have a diverse toolkit to ensure that a range of methods is used to consult the local population.

There should be a proper analysis of the needs of every local community. That is really important in community planning, and it is why the top-down approach would not be helpful. Each community planning partnership should establish, preferably on the basis of evidence, the composition of the local population, the challenges and opportunities, and how public sector partners could go about delivering on a local community plan vision.

If CPPs have that data, they can ensure that there is a clear focus on groups who might be underrepresented or underserved. It is helpful to have the data and the evidence base first, followed by a clear, focused and transparent strategy. All public sector partners should then put their shoulders to the wheel to deliver on that. That

should address issues to do with people who have not felt particularly well served in the past, which includes some of the groups in society to which you were referring.

Councillor Watters: I cannot disagree with that.

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): Given that you both said clearly that the key is integration, partnership working, improving performance and developing the workforce, how do you guard against CPPs looking at the process rather than the outcomes? The evidence that we have heard suggests that that tends to be a priority. Can you give tangible examples of how outcomes can be measured?

Derek Mackay: Yes. There is an expectation that the single outcome agreements that are devised for the new administrations will be more hard edged and will be able to evidence the issues, how they will be tackled and what each public sector partner will do, individually and jointly, to address targets. Single outcome agreements should be open and available for interrogation by local democratically elected politicians, as well as the public, third sector partners and others. There could also be a national focus.

The new-found transparency and focus on single outcome agreements should help to deliver change, because people will feel more accountable. The joint responsibility, whereby health is no longer responsible only for health targets and local government is no longer responsible only for its targets, as it understands them, and everyone is jointly responsible for what is in the single outcome agreement, means that there will be greater team working in each area and nationally. That is why it is important that the health service and others have been involved in reviewing community planning partnerships, to make them more effective.

How many people have contacted you to criticise their local single outcome agreement? Probably not many. However, as we go forward we will probably have a more helpful single outcome agreement, which is meaningful, hard edged and accessible, so that it is a monitoring arrangement in relation to what public sector partners are doing to address the challenges in each local area. That should ensure that there is a greater sense of responsibility for jointly achieving the outcomes.

Councillor Watters: For a politician, nothing is simpler than looking at inputs. We find it comforting to be able to say that we will have 56,000 teachers, or 1,000 extra policemen. It is easy to evidence that we have delivered in that regard, and it is comforting for politicians to have

such a nice wee cot blanket and say, "That's lovely."

However, we want to know what is happening on the ground as a result of what we are doing. I am the first to admit that what is proposed is not the easiest approach. The easiest approach would be to say, "We're going to spend £10 million doing X"—we can tell people that we spent the £10 million, but we do not know what it delivered.

The community planning partnership, outcomes approach is harder to do if we do not evaluate what is delivered and its impact on the community. That is why I talked about having Audit Scotland on board, to look at how CPPs work. Up to this point, Audit Scotland's problem has been that we have all been working to different targets. It can look at health, local government and other parts of the public sector, but when the sectors come together under a community planning partnership it cannot evaluate the success of our delivery, because we all have different targets.

That is why work has been done and Audit Scotland will produce a report—in June, I think—on how it will interact with community planning partners, to consider what we are delivering and its impact, in relation to the outcomes that will be set. That is not an easy option. The easy option for both the Government and local government would be to say, "Meet the target." However, as you know, we never take the easy option; we always take the option that means the most.

I will give an example. When the Christie commission took evidence, we talked to the lead officers for health and local government, who work jointly for health and local government. It is great to have a target that is set for a cancer patient to get treatment within four weeks, two weeks or whatever, but it struck me how much more effective it would be if we could diagnose the condition three months earlier. That would have an impact, make a difference and change the situation.

Once a patient gets to a certain stage, how quickly we see them is not the end game; the issue is how early we diagnose that there is a problem in the first place. We need to make that shift. I use that as an example, because it strikes me that sometimes we put the emphasis at the wrong end. A shift of emphasis would have a much bigger impact on people and communities.

Margaret Mitchell: You are preaching to the converted.

Councillor Watters: God bless you.

Margaret Mitchell: However, you still have not answered the question that is at the nub of the issue, which is how you measure outcomes. You said that one way to get accountability will be for

elected politicians to look at how CPPs work, but you have not given them any tools to measure how the outcomes will be evaluated. Without that data, we will not win hearts and minds.

Some submissions that we have received say that it is difficult for people to do enough to stop a worsening of services, let alone spend money on prevention. Of course prevention is the way forward, but it is much more difficult in a climate in which budgets are restricted.

Derek Mackay: Okay; I will have another try. Not only will there be new scrutiny arrangements, but the importance that we attach to CPPs should give that scrutiny greater focus. There will be greater transparency. If single outcome agreements are used properly, they can be published in the same way that Scotland performs is published, whereby the Scottish Government produces its targets and measures its performance in detail against those targets.

The same could happen with CPPs, which could publish information about their progress in the short, medium and long term. The information could focus on outcomes. As the president of COSLA says, there should be less focus on inputs, such as how much money has been put in and how many people work in a particular area, and more focus on outcomes. The point is: what difference are you making to a local community? Whether the objectives are about life expectancy, the worklessness rate, educational attainment and achievement, or whatever, they will be agreed by the CPP and monitored, assessed and audited by the auditing authorities that are working in partnership with us. The information will be published, transparent and made available to democratically elected members, as well as to the population at large.

That feels pretty robust to me and looks like a step in the right direction. The arrangements are far more robust than those that we have had up till now. I am sure that you monitor your local council's performance closely now, and having the ability to do that with CPPs, when all parts of the public sector are part of the process, will be even more critical. The system will be transparent and more robust, and democratically elected authorities will be part of the process. I think that that will give you the reassurance that you seek.

I cannot tell you today what the audit process looks like, because that work has not yet been done; it is work in progress. The new arrangements will come out for the new administrations. Audit Scotland and the Accounts Commission are working with us as enthusiastic partners and that process will be a fundamental part of the new system.

Margaret Mitchell: That is key, because outcomes are sometimes hard to measure. The example that Councillor Waters gave is a case in point. How do you measure the prevention of that condition? If prevention kicked in early, the person would never get to the stage of accessing the service.

We have heard in evidence that there is often a conflict between national and local outcome priorities. How will that be managed? Specifically, what is the role of community partnerships in relation to services such as the single police force?

10:30

Councillor Watters: On your last point, the change from regional police and fire services to a national service gives us an opportunity to build in arrangements for their interaction with the CPP. Yesterday, I met the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and discussed this very issue and the fact that, in designing the new service, we have an opportunity to examine how the police interact with the community. Of course, they are a full partner at the moment; with the change, their involvement should not be any less. Indeed, we have an opportunity to make it better. We have still to discuss whether an area or regional commander will interact with the local CPP but, with the change that is being made next April, we have the chance to ensure that our co-operation with the police is better than we have ever had.

Margaret Mitchell: Perhaps I can stop you there, Councillor Watters. You talk about interaction, but that is very far removed from the decision making that was envisaged in this service reform.

Councillor Watters: I might not be using the proper words. Participation with the police at a local level will be vital, and we have the opportunity to build that into the changes that are being made not only to community planning but to the police.

Margaret Mitchell: Again, you use the word "participation". You make it sound as if CPPs and local authorities will be consultees rather than decision makers.

Councillor Watters: No. As we are discussing at the moment, the police plan, which will be agreed at local level, will become part of the CPP. We will not be a consultee; we will be part of the decision-making process on how policing will be delivered in communities.

Margaret Mitchell: I can tell you that this very concern has been raised in some of the submissions that we have received. It would be helpful if the minister, too, could clarify that,

instead of the local commander simply participating with the CPP, the CPP itself will have decision-making powers in this regard.

Derek Mackay: Before I answer, I seek some clarification. Are you asking whether CPPs will be able to make decisions on behalf of the police force?

Margaret Mitchell: I am asking whether, when the local commander comes to inform the CPP about a way forward on a certain issue and the CPP takes a different view, the CPP can influence that decision and change that way forward.

Derek Mackay: That is perfectly clear. As I said earlier, CPPs are not in themselves independent corporate delivery bodies; they are partnership organisations in which lead elements of the public sector still commission the work and do the job. The members of the CPP will jointly arrive at the community plan agreement and single outcome agreement for each local area and agree on what they will do individually and collectively to meet those objectives. The CPP can instruct an organisation to do anything with regard to partnership; as we know, that kind of partnership culture works and the same approach will be taken with the police, the fire service and—for that matter—the proposed health and social care partnerships, the introduction of which has been supported by Parliament.

The arrangements for CPPs will not cut across the proposed decision-making structures for the single police force, the single fire service or the health and social care partnerships; in fact, they will augment them, because this move gives us an opportunity to ensure greater involvement. In response to your question, if on a certain matter a CPP took a different view from that of the police service, it could try to influence that decision in the same way that all the partners in a CPP try to influence one another with regard to the partnership's objectives and how they should be met. The democratic accountability and scrutiny of the proposed single police force will, unlike at the present time, ensure flexibility for local arrangements, with the local commander having a relationship or working together with, say, a community safety committee in a local authority.

I will give you an example. The council of which I was a member—Renfrewshire Council—might choose to have a community safety committee, which the local commander and his officers would attend. The members of the committee would discuss local issues and influence one another on how they should prioritise resources and raise issues. Alternatively, there could be a greater Renfrewshire committee that also involved, with their agreement, East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde.

The Government has allowed for flexibility on what things should look like locally. That seems sensible to me. Under that local approach, we take into account what is right and what will work for each local area, and also what will work for the national police service. It will continue to be a local service with a national leadership. We are taking out unnecessary layers of bureaucracy to release savings that can be invested in diversionary activities, front-line police officers and the kind of service that we expect to see in future.

How will that interplay with community planning partnerships? Those partnerships will be organic and locally led between police and local democratically elected councils, but there is an expectation that, at the most senior level locally, there will be equal representation on any good community planning partnership, because they cannot address issues of community safety without having the police, the fire authorities and others at the table. We will have more democratic accountability, transparency and senior input under the new arrangements, rather than less.

Margaret Mitchell: What will happen if there is a conflict between national and local outcomes?

Derek Mackay: There is rarely conflict between national and local outcomes. I do not think that any member could give me an example of an objective, an indicator or a performance measure that is not right. I cannot think off the top of my head of anything that local government has set out to do that we would object to. There is sometimes disagreement about what is the greatest priority. Some councils will have different priorities from others, or indeed from the Government, because of what matters the most to them locally.

What happened with the previous single outcome agreement and community planning regime? The Government created a range of outcomes and a range of indicators, and from that menu local government picked what was most appropriate locally, while recognising that we are all working together for the common good. Again, we will not have a top-down, systematic, checklist approach and specify what local partnerships must do. Of course they must all work together for the common good, but it will be for community planning partnerships to determine what is needed in their area. Given the composition of their area, they will determine what we need to address and how we can address it. There is much more agreement than disagreement on those things.

It rarely happens, but if there is a local conflict, I am sure that the partnership will focus on what local people feel is a priority for them. If that is the most important thing to them, that is how they will choose to spend resources.

I cannot think of an example in which a community planning partnership has said, "We're not doing any of that because it's not important." It is more a question of priorities. Given the diversity of our country, different issues matter differently across Scotland.

Margaret Mitchell: Can I suggest that the police might be an example? The national priorities under a single force might be thought to take priority over what a local council or CPP thinks should be happening on the ground.

Derek Mackay: I am intrigued. Can you give me an example that has been raised in evidence?

Margaret Mitchell: An example could be the redeployment of police to a place where a conference is being hosted. It seems to me that that is a good example in relation to decision making and the national outcomes, given that the local commander will be accountable to the chief constable, who in turn will be under pressure from ministers.

Derek Mackay: No operational police officer will be under pressure from ministers to do anything that is not in their operational duties. I asked you for a specific example because I could not think of one. When there is a national event, it is surely in everyone's interests that a proper risk assessment is done and we would expect the officers of the police force to examine that risk and then address it by way of resourcing. I cannot see how that would conflict with either a national or a local priority, so I do not think that the example contradicts my point.

Resourcing will still be a matter for local commanders, who will consider what is right for them. That structure will remain the same. There will be democratic accountability around the policies that are deployed by the police and there will be no interference by ministers—or any other politician, for that matter—on operational matters. I do not think that the conflict that you perceive exists in reality.

Margaret Mitchell: I hope that that will be the case, but my feeling is that, in politics as in every other sphere of life, we should expect the unexpected.

Derek Mackay: We have set a very ambitious agenda for community planning. I am sure that you see the unity between the Scottish Government and local government; that is shared right across the public sector.

Margaret Mitchell: I admire your optimism, minister.

Kevin Stewart: After all that, perhaps I should declare an interest as a member of Grampian police board as well.

Currently, the eight police forces come together to police national events with agreement across the board, so I cannot see any difference with the single force.

I return to Mrs Mitchell's original point about measuring targets and outcomes. I will play devil's advocate. Sometimes, we are obsessed not only with measuring but with measuring the wrong things. For example, we have a statutory performance indicator for the number of library books that are lent from each library, which means nothing nowadays because libraries are about much more than just lending books. Where are we on agreeing measures that mean something in real life? I know that it is very difficult to measure community wellbeing but, surely, that is the key in everything that we are trying to achieve. I ask the witnesses to comment on that.

Councillor Watters: You are absolutely right. Sometimes, we try to measure the wrong thing. What is important is the difference that an outcome makes to a community and that is what we need to measure. We will be able to measure some of the differences immediately, but some of the changes will be longer term. However, if we fail to reduce demand, we will never be able to afford the demand if it keeps building in the way that it is.

Early intervention is not only an opportunity; it is essential for the wellbeing of Scotland. For instance, in a child's life in education, it might be 10 years before we can evaluate exactly what the outcome is. However, if we are examining how many people we get out of hospital early, we can measure that annually. There will be different measurements. However, the one important thing is that we are very determined to establish a system with Audit Scotland that enables us to measure the impact of the outcomes that we are trying to drive forward.

We do not have such a system at present. Audit Scotland has said that it is extremely difficult to create, but we need to make it as easy as possible for the measurements to be made so that we politicians and other community planning partners can be convinced that what we are doing is right. The last thing that I would want to happen is, in two years' time, for us to think that we had gone down the wrong road. We need to know as quickly as possible that what we are doing is having the desired impact.

We will be able to measure some things immediately; other things will be a matter of generational change, but it is no less important to Scotland's communities that those changes start to happen and that we get the impact as quickly as possible. I am sorry to ramble on, but I feel strongly about this.

Kevin Stewart: You were not rambling at all. That was common sense, as far as I am concerned. Would the minister like to give his view?

Derek Mackay: You are right that we have sometimes measured the wrong things. Like most, I am bemused that, as politicians, we spend a lot of time debating inputs until we come to committee, where everyone is really focused on outcomes. Then, we go into the chamber and argue over inputs—for example how many nurses, teachers and police officers we should have.

Of course inputs are important, but there must be a greater focus on outcomes because they are what change lives. We will never be able to measure exactly what we did that made the difference on early years and early intervention, but we know from our evidence that investing in early years works. Our £500 million of preventative spending in such policy areas is a step change in how we do business.

On outcomes, we also have to get the data right. Too often, we may not have had the right baseline against which to measure progress. Members will want reassurance that we are focusing accurately on the data and that, where possible, that data is available. It is incredibly important that whatever we do locally is transparent so that local people understand how resources are being used to make a change. There will always be an interest in inputs and how public money is used, and that is only right and proper, but it is outcomes that will make the difference. How have we improved local education or local health services, or the life chances of our most vulnerable people? Those are the things that matter, and they matter more than inputs.

The measurements are very important and having properly justifiable and accountable local data will make all the difference. That is not to say that we want to spend a lot of money on consultants and bureaucracy—absolutely not. The data already exists in large part.

10:45

Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab): I welcome the minister and Councillor Watters. On that last point, minister, how are we going to do things differently now? That is my brief question.

Derek Mackay: It is an excellent question. What will change with the new arrangements? At this stage, I cannot go into how the different structures will work. The key things for me are a greater focus on place and prevention; greater pace of integration of services to achieve outcomes; a sense of joint responsibility across the public sector so that people work together as never before to achieve joint outcomes; greater

involvement with people so that the structures feel more connected to communities; and arrangements that are supported and monitored by the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland. Those are just five ways that I think community planning will be different in the future. Those five ingredients will add to the partnership and the culture that we are creating around community planning and get people to move out of their silos towards joint working to deliver for their communities. We will hold them responsible for that.

Councillor Watters: That is absolutely right. If Anne McTaggart is asking what individual community partnerships are going to do, I do not know. They will focus on their own priorities. Some of those priorities will be similar or even the same, but others will be different. Once a partnership has had a chance to look at and set priorities, it will be able to decide how it is going to achieve a solution.

We have an opportunity to make a difference to how we deliver. What is important is the delivery and the impact that that delivery has, as well as the difference that we can make to communities as a result of the change. If we do not do it, we will be failing our communities badly because we will never be able to meet the rising demand unless we intervene much earlier, no matter at what level. We are going to have to do it.

What will we achieve? Hopefully, we will have a great impact on our communities without spending much more money. We will be preventing rather than trying to cure.

John Pentland: The effectiveness of any CPP will be determined by the shared outcome agreement, delivery and reporting. The partners that are brought together will have different governance and accountability. What changes does the review propose to make to current arrangements?

Derek Mackay: First of all, there will be a can-do approach. I referred to evidence that the Auditor General gave to the Finance Committee when I was a member of that committee. It was perfectly clear that organisations can work—right now—across what they perceive to be accountability or organisational boundaries. There is no barrier to a great deal of integration at the moment. The tools are already there to do the job and we can already see it happening. Some education authorities have merged their decision-making and management structures, and there is greater joint working on social procurement. Again, the barriers to integration, to focusing on place and prevention and to improving performance and workforce development that people seem to think are there are not actually there.

The barriers can be overcome but, for the avoidance of doubt, we will give further guidance to the new community planning partnerships on how they can go about their business. If any legislative boundaries are identified, the Government will give an enthusiastic hearing to calls for improvements in legislation that will make community planning work better.

The thrust of what I am saying is that many organisations are just getting on with it at the moment and many of the barriers are simply in people's minds and can be overcome. Perhaps some people need more reassurance and more good examples. However, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and much good work is happening on the ground already, whether in social procurement, service provision, integration, joint projects or overcoming organisational boundaries.

Councillor Watters: The real change is that it will not be a shared outcome but a single outcome. The drive will be to get a single outcome that all the partners buy into delivering. How do we get to the single outcome? Sometimes it will be directed by the national priorities that we are trying to achieve and sometimes it will be set by local priorities that are agreed by the community planning partnership and to which everybody buys in. We will therefore look to drive towards a single outcome rather than a shared outcome from which there can be divergence.

Derek Mackay: This sums it up for me. What is the difference and how do we get buy-in from across the public sector? It is achievable by changing the mindset, and some of it already exists. Rather than some people saying, "That's not my job," or, "That's not my organisational role," we want them to say, "What can my organisation do to achieve that objective?" That is a step change and everything that we do will service that viewpoint.

Margaret Mitchell: There is an aspect that you have not mentioned at all. Communication is key to achieving the integration or partnership on preventative spend. How important is co-location for achieving good communication?

Derek Mackay: It is important in part. Good co-location projects have led to better joint working and a better understanding of organisational needs. Clearly, if all the services or all the staff are in one place, then, rather than waiting for an e-mail or a call back, you can walk across to someone's desk and do the deal, the casework or whatever. Co-location works, but it is not essential for good joint working. It helps because it is a catalyst or stimulus and is a good way of doing business.

There are great examples across the country of the co-location of services such as police, local

government and health services. We do not require physical co-location for joint working and integration to happen, but it is a good way of providing services at the front line and a good way for organisations to work together. That is not to suggest that we put all parts of the public sector in the same building and that is the job done. It is not as simple as that. It is about relationships, professionalism and shared responsibility. However, more often than not, co-location is a success because, on a physical and relationship basis, it brings officials and public sector partners together.

The public like that. We may have forgotten about the public in some of this debate. The public do not mind who provides most services as long as they get the services at a standard that they are happy with. The public do not need to worry about the public sector interface or the wiring board for how public sector organisations work together, because they assume that we are working together. However, co-location is good for the public, too, because it can provide a one-stop shop or a more streamlined service, which is all to the good for the public sector.

We have encouraged co-location and will continue to do so. It works well across the country. It is not essential to make partnership working happen, but it certainly helps.

Councillor Watters: Where the opportunity presents itself, co-location must be considered seriously. Given the tightness of capital and revenue budgets, it might not be a community planning partnership's first priority. However, if changes are to happen, it must be considered. If the opportunity of co-location presents itself, community planning partners must take it.

The Convener: There are no more questions, but does either of the witnesses want to make closing remarks?

Councillor Watters: Thank you very much for listening and for the very friendly questions that came our way.

The Convener: Thank you.

10:54

Meeting suspended.

11:01

On resuming—

The Convener: I welcome our second panel of witnesses: David Martin, chief executive of Renfrewshire Council, chair of SOLACE Scotland and chair of the national community planning group; Professor Fiona Mackenzie, chief executive of NHS Forth Valley; Assistant Chief Officer Lewis

Ramsay of Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Service; Bob Christie, outcomes programme manager with the Improvement Service; Mark McAteer, director of governance and performance management, also with the Improvement Service; and Chief Constable Bill Skelly of Lothian and Borders Police. *[Interruption.]* I apologise—I meant to say “Assistant Chief Constable”. Now that we have called you chief constable in Parliament, you will have to get the pay.

Given that we have quite a big panel, members who want to ask a particular panel member a question should say so. I do not think that we need every single witness to answer every single question. I will kick off by asking David Martin to outline for us the formation and operation of the NCPG.

David Martin (SOLACE Scotland and National Community Planning Group): Thank you for the opportunity to talk to the committee. If it is okay, we will endeavour to disrespect boundaries and demonstrate a bit of joined-up public service provision in our responses to members’ questions.

I am sure that I speak for us all when I say that community planning is our job and that we are very committed to it. One of the essential elements to its success is effective and strong political and managerial leadership at national and local level and, as an observation on the evidence that I heard in the previous session, I would want to reassure the committee that the commitment and very strong unanimity shown by the minister and Councillor Watters are shared at the officer level.

Established in 2008 to ensure that we dealt with certain interagency issues, the national community planning group comprises representation from Scotland’s council chief executives, the national health service and the police and fire services and is supported by the Improvement Service. Over the three or four years for which it has existed, it has met every quarter or so to provide a form of air traffic control by examining problems and spreading some of the good practice that was mentioned earlier. However, as it is very much an officer group, it has never had a formal interface with locally or nationally elected members and, as we make clear in our submission, we believe that it is essential that some form of democratically and politically led national community planning forum be introduced in future.

Kevin Stewart: My questions are for Mr Martin and Mr McAteer in the first instance and follow on from my questions to the previous panel on what some might describe as our obsession with measuring. Where are we at with the new benchmarking from SOLACE that we have been waiting for? Is the length of time that it is taking

down to the fact that, as Councillor Watters suggested earlier, you are trying to get it right?

David Martin: I do not think that you or anyone else in Scottish public life is obsessed with performance data. We need good, transparent performance information for which people are accountable, which is open and easy to understand and which can be widely shared with citizens and members of the public. That is what has taken all this time; we have been trying to ensure that the data is clean, accurate and reliable.

We have also endeavoured to develop our benchmarking indicators to ensure that we have not only the traditional input or output measures that members have referred to but certain outcome measures. Indeed, the Improvement Service might want to say a little more about that. The data is just about clean and we intend to use councils’ statutory obligation to report publicly on performance as the first outing for the data. We will then use it across Scotland in what I hope will be an easily comparable way to allow citizens to compare the performance of their local authority and public sector partners, where that is relevant, with that of others. We have been debating that very issue with Audit Scotland and the Accounts Commission. We are certainly committed to producing this information, but the reason for the timescale is simply that there is a lot of information to get through.

Mark McAteer (Improvement Service): As we have previously said to the committee, we are using 2010-11 data as the baseline for the exercise. David Martin mentioned the data cleansing exercise that is under way; it largely takes account of support service costs in local government and how they are attributed in the accountancy systems. For example, some costs are attributed at corporate level and others at service level and, with the way that councils return data to the Scottish Government through the local finance return, it is not always clear where some of those costs lie.

As a result, over the past couple of months, we have been doing some work with directors of finance on providing guidance for all councils to show how they can adjust their finance figures to take the cost issue into account and to give us more accurate comparable figures across major areas of spend. This week, the councils will conclude a final sense check of the refashioned data to ensure that it is absolutely accurate and that data will drive the benchmarking exercise over the next few weeks. In response to your question, we are probably a couple of weeks away from pulling together for the first time the final data set for the baseline year and, as David Martin has said, that will be released to the councils and over

the summer and into the autumn to the public through local public performance reporting.

It is also worth stressing David Martin's point about the comparability of data. Benchmarking families will be established with councils to ensure that, once they have the data showing variation across the indicators, they can sit down in their family groups and with relevant councils and begin to explore the reasons for such variations, whether they are to do with, for example, different structures, different approaches to reporting data or genuine differences in performance and, if so, how they might learn from best practice in the rest of the family group or in other councils. As I have said, we are a few weeks away from having the core data, which will then go to councils.

Kevin Stewart: For me, the key to all this is having relevant data.

Now that you have reached this stage, can you tell us whether local politicians have bought into the work that you have done thus far?

David Martin: I believe so. The fact that we have had regular discussions with COSLA leaders, who have warmly welcomed our approach, is a good indicator of that. I know of no local authority chief executive or council leader who does not want a deeper understanding of how their organisation is performing or who does not want to find out where they can improve. In my experience, all local authorities bar none are committed to that and this data will help in that respect. The buy-in is definitely there.

Anne McTaggart: What are the main remaining barriers to integration between public sector partners? To what extent does the statement of ambition address the barriers? Are there ways in which partnership working could be improved that are not mentioned in the statement?

David Martin: The barriers to community planning are mostly mindset barriers, to be honest. The statement of ambition covers the issues.

The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 is almost 10 years old and we have had three or four years of experience of and learning from single outcome agreements. The statement of ambition gives us an opportunity to re-energise and to build a bit more confidence among all stakeholders that community planning can deliver.

Things are going very much in the right direction. What most community planning partnerships are doing right now is having a good look at local needs—they are making a strategic assessment, if you like. That is taking place in an inclusive way, which involves discussions not just with the partners who are represented here, whom you would expect to be involved, but with the

community, the voluntary sector and, in many areas, the private sector.

The approach is building a shared vision for place. Over the summer, in all the community partnerships that I am aware of, a clear set of local outcomes will emerge—a deal between the community, local government and national Government on what we are trying to deliver in the community.

The statement of ambition is in the right area and I am confident that the right issues are being addressed.

Anne McTaggart: What is Professor Mackenzie's view?

Professor Fiona Mackenzie (National Community Planning Group): The important thing about the statement is that it makes the point that we are moving from a perception that community planning is a local authority activity, to which others are peripheral, to a much clearer understanding of partners' involvement. That is fundamental and deals with uncertainty among people who might have thought that they were on the second rung rather than the first rung. Partners who are looking in therefore start to see the process differently and, from the perspective of the councils that are looking out, the statement deals with any feeling that the issue belonged to them and not to the other partners.

The words that people used in this meeting—"reinvigorate", "renew", "refresh" and so on—give the message about getting energy into the thing in a different way. The statement of ambition comes at a good time. We have done what we have done under the old approach and we are ready for a different approach.

James Dornan: This question is for Bob Christie and Mark McAteer, in the first instance. We have heard a lot about sharing budgets during the past couple of weeks. Would shared budgets necessarily lead to better integration, or is that unrealistic? If you have concerns about shared budgets, how can they be addressed?

Mark McAteer: On the basis of work on joint or outcome budgeting that we have done with a couple of community planning partnerships during the past year, we concluded with partners that many of the budgetary barriers that we have been talking about come down to accountancy systems. All our accountancy systems, whether they are in the NHS, local government, the police service or the fire service, have to meet international standards and so on, and it is difficult to shift them.

In the project with partners, we moved quickly to stop talking just about budgets and start talking about resources. We asked what people's budgets buy them—staff, premises, information and so

on—and how we might work together better to plan the deployment of those resources against the outcomes that are set. We considered the need for a performance management system that enables partners to know that the resources are driving forward on the outcomes.

Partners found the approach much easier and more productive than one that is about who has financial accountability for X, Y and Z, in relation to the financial ledgers and so on. We need to think about not just budgets but resources. We need to think about how we work as partners to understand our collective resources better and about how those resources are deployed and performance managed against the outcomes. That is the forward trajectory for us. Bob Christie might want to add to what I said.

Bob Christie (Improvement Service and National Community Planning Group): This is a minor point, which arises from the statement of ambition. The expectation that partnerships will show how they are looking at the totality of the available resource and targeting it on the community's priorities will be a huge lever to enable partners to find flexible ways to get around the technicalities of budgeting and organising the full resources appropriately.

James Dornan: What do the other witnesses think?

11:15

Professor Mackenzie: It is a really good question. To give you a practical example, I can show you that NHS Forth Valley has done amazing things in relation to alcohol by making use of the brief opportunities that the health sector gets to do early intervention. However, what we do does not work unless it is linked into licensing policies, policing arrangements and so on. I see an opportunity to much better align what we are currently doing under a much clearer framework, which will mean that we get a much better outcome for the same resource.

Lewis Ramsay (National Community Planning Group): Resources are key. From my experience, the issue involves having the courage to deploy resources in a different way, through the CPPs. Alcohol is a key example. I can speak only for my service, but alcohol has a massive impact on fire deaths and casualties. If I were to continue to engage on the same trajectory, it would make little difference but, if I invest resources into health, education and police, I see a massive difference—I already have done this year, through some work in the total place project in Glasgow. I stress the importance of being able to deploy resources flexibly locally and with authority.

Assistant Chief Constable Bill Skelly (National Community Planning Group): With regard to the changes to the CPP model, we are trying to ensure that it is not a peripheral activity and that it is part of people's core activity. It is a wider issue than simply the money that is put into things; it involves core resources.

When people talk about shared budgets, there is a danger that they are talking about carving off a piece of what they are already doing, setting it aside and putting it into a collective pot, as if that is the solution when, actually, the decisive shift that we are looking for involves bringing the activity into the core delivery, with an understanding of what that means to each service.

Understanding what the spend is in the first place, so that people can understand the benefits of engaging in that activity at a core level, is fundamental, as it allows people to see exactly what their return is from the piece of work. For example, investment in an approach to alcohol is not about carving off a slice of what we are doing and setting it aside as a shared budget; it is about saying that the investment is core to what we are doing to create wellbeing and improve the health of our communities. Part of that involves alcohol dependency and the behaviours that result from it. If we can invest in that together, there is a core return for us, as an organisation. There is a link between the two elements. It is not as simple as shaving off part of our budget to create a shared area; it involves an understanding of what we are doing.

James Dornan: There seems to be a clear consensus that shared budgets are not required.

Assistant Chief Constable Skelly: There are other good examples of people working together in an excellent way. For example, child protection arrangements involve a number of services. That is not about having a shared budget; it is about having a shared outcome that we are all signed up to achieving and that we all use our core resources to invest in delivering, in order to provide better arrangements for those children. That is the kind of direction that people are looking to move in, as opposed to starting with a shared budget and delivering a service from there.

David Martin: I agree with that. I will give you a local example, because I am conscious that examples help. In Renfrewshire, all the partners had a look at what we spend on children and young people and discovered that it was more than £200 million. When you start thinking about what you want to achieve, using that resource, you rapidly get into discussions about priorities and outcomes, which help to focus people's minds on the things that make a difference. You then work backwards from there to think about how you can bend your spend. I completely agree that it is

about the pooling of resources rather than carving bits off and re-ring fencing. If we do that, there is a danger that we will go backwards.

Margaret Mitchell: My question is for everyone on the panel. To what extent are CPPs currently focused on outcomes-based approaches? What would be key to encouraging them to adopt that approach? What are the major challenges in that regard?

Mark McAteer: Yes, our CPPs are focused on outcomes. From my experience of working up and down the country, I know that the language of outcomes is much more prevalent than it has ever been. In the past couple of years, I have not been to a CPP meeting at which the outcomes have not been part of the discussion in some way. The discussion often focuses on what we mean by an outcome. That is an important discussion that partners must have and continue to have with their communities, so that we are clear about what we are trying to achieve against the outcomes that we have set through things such as the SOA. We often find that partners are heavily engaged in that dialogue and we are brought in to help to facilitate some of that. In that sense, the CPPs are very much committed to outcomes.

We must still drive that down through delivery arrangements much better than we have done, but we are two or three years into the approach and it is no surprise that we are at an early stage. The commitment is strong, however, and we might be able to share with you some facts and figures from the survey that we finished with the 32 CPPs just yesterday. You will see from those the genuine commitment that exists across the partnerships to define their outcomes, work together around their outcomes and start to reshape how they deliver services in our communities accordingly.

Bob Christie: I entirely endorse what Mark McAteer says—unsurprisingly. The SOA has required a refocusing of community planning partnerships and the individual partnerships. It is early days yet, but they are starting to think about their contribution to a shared outcome. The challenge is in understanding what an individual partner can do to achieve a fairly long-term outcome and what it can do with its partners. The challenge is around what works and what works best, and it comes at a particularly difficult time for us given the shrinking budgets that are available to public sector partners. There is pressure to retrench back into core business, therefore we need this review and a statement of ambition to drive the focus forward on to the outcome to create a permissive atmosphere and culture in which the default expectation is that the partners will find a way of delivering the defined outcome, getting around the inherited structure, systems

and bureaucracies that may have got in the way previously.

David Martin: Community planning and the SOA world have been relatively successful in Scotland so far, but we need to raise the bar. I agree that that is a challenge. Improving our focus on outcomes using the data that we have—rich data is available in Scotland and we perhaps do not use it as well as we could sometimes—to conduct a good-quality strategic assessment of the particular needs of a community is a hugely empowering exercise. Pragmatic steps must be taken, and we need to ensure that managerial and political leaders are closely involved in the work and drive the process. You cannot delegate this—it is something on which you must set the tone. If you do that, you will be amazed how quickly communities, the voluntary sector, the business community and the multi-agency partners get energised about it.

We are going through a process locally, which I will give as a brief example. We have looked in depth at children and young people, as I mentioned, and we reckon that the key outcomes that partners should focus on—we will debate this with national politicians, too—are tackling child poverty, doing something to raise the attainment of the bottom 25 per cent of children and young people in Renfrewshire, reducing by half the number of looked-after and accommodated children, and so on. We have a range of quite focused outcomes that have been driven and developed by all the partners that I have mentioned. That can be replicated across any other theme that a community planning partnership might look at. It then gets bolted together into an SOA and, in a sense, becomes a business plan for delivering the vision for the local community.

Keeping the language simple is another aspect of it. When we are engaging citizens, it helps not to use some of the florid language that I used earlier. There is an issue about trying to stay focused—it is not rocket science.

That, in a nutshell, is how we begin to move the outcome agenda forward.

Professor Mackenzie: I think that we have got better at it but, to be honest, we are all—I include myself in this—guilty at times of confusing what we mean by outcomes and what measurement we might use along the route. We could do some more work to think through what we mean by successful outcomes. That could be quite a productive national and local debate. I am not sure that, from a public perspective, a good outcome in a remote, west-coast place would look terribly different from an urban outcome. How it would be delivered would be different, and the partners would need to take account of that.

I agree with the colleague who made the point that we probably have rather too much information flowing around at the moment and that we probably need to hone it and be a bit more specific about it.

I can provide good local examples. For example, we have mapped child protection issues that relate to outcomes that the partners are trying to achieve and can track them back clearly to different contributions from different partners. NHS Health Scotland has done some useful work examining organisational outputs. That work is mainly concerned with health improvement but, again, it is useful for tying partners in and for seeing individual contributions resulting in the overall outcome that we are trying to achieve.

My summary is that we are a lot better, but we probably need to take a little step back to ensure that we simplify matters and ensure that people focus properly.

Lewis Ramsay: Most of the points that I would want to make have already been made. I suppose that that is the danger of being this far down the panel.

For me—I speak from personal involvement—the single outcome agreement for fire has been important. If there is grit in the system, it is because, at an early point, we were seduced by a need to have fire appear in the single outcome agreement rather than understanding that we were connected to the outcomes that were in it anyway. For example, if there is something about older people in the single outcome agreement, I can buy into that and manage risk.

It was inevitable that, in some cases, the single outcome agreement or community planning would appear subsidiary to normal or mainstream fire plans. The trick with fire reform will be to extract that line of thought and ensure that everything is governed and managed at a CPP level. That would be most effective for communities.

Assistant Chief Constable Skelly: Thank you for ensuring that I will get the next question first.

There is a huge amount for us to be proud of in how public sector organisations in Scotland have come together around community planning arrangements over recent years. There has been a huge amount of effort, good intent and mutual understanding about what the objectives and outcomes that we are trying to achieve are.

The simple answer to the opening question about whether we have a shared understanding of the outcomes is yes. That is partly because the outcomes are ones that we can all understand: we all believe in wellbeing, we all want it to be improved and, if an outcome, such as reducing reoffending among the young or whatever,

promotes improved wellbeing, it is easy to get people to agree and to sign up to it. A lot of good work has gone on in CPPs throughout Scotland to deliver that.

The second question, below that, is: how much influence do CPPs have over the ability to achieve those mutually understood outcomes? There is wider variation on that. If I come to the table in a CPP, how much of my resource and my ability to influence is tied up in something that is non-discretionary—core business that I must deliver; how much is discretionary but already allocated; and how much discretionary resource is left that I can contribute in the CPP to achieving the outcomes that we all want to achieve?

That is probably the situation on which we are trying to improve with a statement of ambition. We are trying to shift from community planning being all about what discretionary resource is left to understanding that it is core to what we are trying to achieve. One way forward, for example, is what Lewis Ramsay said about trying to ensure that a fire plan is the same as the single outcome agreement so that we are trying to do the same thing in the same environment.

It is about enabling CPPs in the new world to have more influence over how we deliver a shared or single outcome. That is an area of development on which we could all work.

Mark McAteer: I mentioned the survey that we did of all 32 CPPs, which is also mentioned in our written submission. I had a quick skim through it so that I could pick out some facts for the committee. One of the questions that we asked was about what impact the CPPs thought the outcomes approach had had on how they go about doing their business. I will rhyme off a couple of the statistics for you.

On integrated working across the partnerships, 94 per cent of the CPPs said that the outcomes approach was driving integration in ways that had not happened before. On how they go about doing joined-up policy, two thirds said that the SOA had started to drive them towards joint policies across the partnership. On how they business plan, two thirds said that the outcomes approach is driving their business plan. Where they still have some progress to make, it is a question of resources, as we have heard. There are a lot of positives in how far the approach has gone, but there are also some indications of how far the CPPs still have to go. It is an evolving journey, but there is starting to be an impact, so the statement of ambition is right to ask how we can raise the game further.

11:30

Margaret Mitchell: My next question is for Bill Skelly, Lewis Ramsay and David Martin, but I will give Bill his wish and start with him.

You heard the earlier discussion about national versus local outcomes. What will the effect of the new single police force and new fire brigade be on CPPs and local authorities?

Assistant Chief Constable Skelly: If we walk into something unsighted, there is a danger of conflict, but if we all know the national outcomes that we are looking for and we work hard together to develop local outcomes, we can anticipate where there might be conflict and put in place ways of managing that. The issue is eminently solvable by the people who are in place.

When discussions take place at the local level—under the SOA and community planning arrangements and the policing arrangements that are envisaged under the bill—between the local area commander, the local authority and other partners, we hope that they will recognise the national outcomes, just as the national priorities will recognise what is fed into the process from the 32 areas, or however many there are.

There will be an ability to identify where there might be conflict, and those who are involved in the discussion will be able to manage and resolve that conflict before people find that they have to escalate it or there is a pull in different directions and people do not understand why they are not finding the resources in the places where they want them to be. To pick up on the earlier example of how a local community could be affected by a major event, if the community understands what it means to them, it is less likely that there will be conflict.

Lewis Ramsay: The issue has been considered, but it will be truly finalised only once we have the new chief and board and once the national arrangements emerge. I can reassure members that I see nothing nationally that would not have some resonance locally. It comes down to the regional profile and the risk that is grounded in the particular local area, and people will select the priorities that are relevant to them based on that risk. I do not see that there will be any conflict. The overarching necessity to drive down fire deaths, for example, will have resonance throughout Scotland so, at a broad and strategic level, I do not see that there is an issue.

However, there are some other issues to play out. For example, there might be future decisions on operational deployments, the location of fire stations, how they are crewed and the shift systems. Those are detailed issues that might have resonance locally but be controlled nationally, and some means by which to consider

them and approve or agree to them locally will have to be considered.

David Martin: I agree with my colleagues. I suggest that there is less tension between national and local outcomes than has been suggested. The SOA, if it is to be the deal with the local community, provides a great opportunity to thrash things out and get shared priorities. That is the agenda that most community planning partnerships are pursuing.

If my memory serves me right, the first round of SOAs had more than 3,000 individual outcomes. It was just a mess. Perhaps that is not an admission that I should make to you. In the second iteration, the local outcome indicators project that the Improvement Service and SOLACE sponsored with colleagues in the national community planning group got the number down to less than 150. That is still not low enough, but that work provided a menu that rationalised a lot of the national and local tensions. It took a couple of years, but we now have that.

I mentioned the mindset. If we are minded to work through the issues, we can find a way. I am the chief executive of Renfrewshire Council and we have Glasgow airport in our area. I am just as concerned about counter-terrorism as the national police service is. We can find ways of melding the two together in a very real way.

There will be tensions—there is no point in denying that—but the approach that Pat Watters and Derek Mackay outlined provides room for localism and the local expression of national priorities, and I do not think that we will fail to tackle the challenge successfully.

John Pentland: Will David Martin expand on his group's proposal for a national community planning board? How would it work in practice? Is there any danger that it would conflict with the local planning process?

David Martin: I do not believe so. There is always risk, but it would have to operate well and openly in an accountable fashion. Our experience is that we have gained a lot at the officer level from the professional associations talking to one another and working through problems—that will come as no surprise to members—but we have missed the obvious connection and leadership from national and local politicians, which there needs to be. As an officer group, we have held the jackets, but we need politicians to take a leadership role. Forgive me for being so informal.

A national community planning forum—or whatever it was eventually called—could provide a number of positive benefits. It would provide a means for national voluntary organisations to talk to representatives of the Scottish Government and local government, for example. Some

organisations—Scottish Enterprise, for example—find it quite hard to relate to 32 community planning partnerships, but they would find it straightforward to relate to a national forum in which we could debate where they ought to be represented at a local level and how that ought to happen. There is an opportunity for constructive dialogue. Such a forum would also allow best practice to be spread—that was mentioned earlier—in a more realistic way than perhaps happens now. I know that professional associations and officers here do that in their own professional disciplines, but something that actively engages elected politicians nationally and locally would be very supportive of getting better quicker. A national community planning forum, which we certainly recommend, could take such things on board.

On how such a forum would be composed, obviously the devil is in the detail, but it needs to be politically led and supported by people like us.

John Pentland: You heard us mentioning how the third sector regards itself as being deemed only a consultee. Do you share that view? Should the third sector be a real partner at the table?

David Martin: I absolutely believe the latter. The idea that the voluntary sector is just a consultee is antediluvian. In practical terms, the provision and delivery of public services to citizens has involved the joint engagement of the traditional public sector, the voluntary sector and the private sector for a long time. We need to find better ways of engaging the community and its representatives through the voluntary sector, the third sector and social enterprises actively and as equal partners in community planning partnerships. I think that that is a common view across community planning partnerships in Scotland.

Professor Mackenzie: I think that the new arrangements will make it much easier to have that interface. One difficulty for the third sector is that it gets different messages from community planning partners. If we came together in a more organised fashion, the message that it would get and the opportunities that we would have to work more creatively with it would be increased.

Lewis Ramsay: I agree. We have heard about that already, and the arguments have been well rehearsed. The third sector can be difficult to engage with, as it is so diverse. A lot of the work happens away from the CPPs. I think that the new arrangements will enable much better integration with the third sector and add a lot of value.

Assistant Chief Constable Skelly: I absolutely agree with what has been said. An additional problem in respect of the third sector is that the other people around the table will often have

commissioned its representatives in some way, so there is a different relationship between third sector representatives at the table and the others, who essentially come with resources. The third sector representatives come with a method of delivering a solution, but are beholden to the other people at the table to provide the resources for that. Perhaps that lends a different dynamic to their relationship from the one that others around the table might enjoy.

Bob Christie: The CPP survey that we have just completed indicated that, interestingly, the voluntary sector is represented on the boards of all 32 community planning partnerships. Apart from elected members of the council administrations, no other group has 100 per cent representation.

The voluntary sector's representation on the thematic partnerships, which may consider community safety or issues such as unemployment and the economy, is more than 90 per cent.

We have also discovered, and it has been useful to validate, that almost two thirds of community planning partnerships are already localising their community planning structures and developing local community plans for sub-areas within the council area. Again, the voluntary sector is represented in more than 90 per cent of those structures.

The voluntary sector is part of the process. As Fiona Mackenzie said, getting the right interface with it is important. Perhaps the issue is whether the voluntary sector feels that it has enough influence or understands that it is only one of a number of voices that can come together to define the best outcomes for the community with the community.

Margaret Mitchell: My final question concerns communication. One local authority that we visited had a board that oversaw what was going on in the community planning partnership. It met almost daily to ensure that it was aware of any problems and to sort them out.

What are your views on how best to achieve the necessary level of communication, for example through co-location or a level of oversight such as I mentioned? We will go round the table, starting in the middle with Fiona Mackenzie.

Professor Mackenzie: I knew that there would be an advantage to being in the middle at some point.

Co-location is really helpful. In my local area, we have brought together all our local authority, police and health service child protection services. That is a massive benefit. The informal communications that happen when we are within the same facility are obviously really important.

In our partnership, we have decided to consider our assets collectively and have done a big piece of work on how well we use them, which is ahead of the game, I guess. For example, the partners collectively spend something like £55 million maintaining their asset base. The exercise that we have done considered, from the locality upwards, how well we can use our assets and how we can rationalise them sensibly. It is not about me deciding that I will take services out of a locality or shut things in the absence of inputs from colleagues.

We found that we had many opportunities to bring services into shared buildings. For example, the police were able to move into some of our facilities and we moved health professionals into local authority facilities and vice versa. That is an important part of the work and I definitely advocate that it is based on an assessment of the overall facilities and then built up the way, because that way we are able to deal sensitively and appropriately with local concerns and the importance that people attach to facilities.

That is not the answer, but it is a big part of it. It is certainly one of the supporting strategies that we should look to deploy.

David Martin: Fiona Mackenzie has dealt with the multi-agency aspect, and I agree with her on that. However, one of the challenges is communicating successfully and sustainably with citizens and communities, and that side of the community planning coin requires more development.

A number of community planning partnerships of which I am aware have done not audits—that would be too grand a word—but reviews of how they engage with their citizens. Surprise, surprise—they do it differently. However, they are moving towards shared public service panels, using the same localised structures that Mark McAteer mentioned for all kinds of consultations and dialogue.

They are also delegating a little bit of actual spending power—I accept that it is only marginal—to local communities to allow a bit of engagement, because that works and they can get a variety of other things going on the back of it.

Furthermore, they are ensuring that a community planning partnership's main themes and outcomes, whatever they are, can be localised so that individual communities are able to engage. Even in a small geography like Renfrewshire, that is important.

Such initiatives and approaches lead to much richer engagement with communities and citizens. The use of social media and single web portals is becoming much more prevalent and we could exploit it more.

Lewis Ramsay: I will comment on the multi-agency aspect for a moment.

Co-location works well if it is appropriate. Recently, the fire service formed a partnership unit that got key partners around the table within one building. That came out strongly in our recent best-value audit. It allowed us to think again about policies that we use to engage with citizens and to reshape them on the basis of other agencies' experience. That has worked particularly well. The national service could adopt that model and deploy it locally.

I support the points about community engagement and communicating with citizens, which is key. We must understand the priorities from the bottom up and try to bend resources to match them. That will be important to us.

11:45

Assistant Chief Constable Skelly: I will build on a point that Lewis Ramsay made. The communication aspect can be subdivided. It is really important for a CPP to understand why it is trying to communicate, what it is trying to communicate, how it will communicate and whether that communication extends to engagement with citizens.

Communication without any purpose is at best just background noise and at worst a waste of time, because it will not get the information that people look for. We must understand the purpose and target communication in the right areas, but communication must be a two-way street.

On Monday, I heard about an example of work in South Lanarkshire, where getting a target population to engage with local health service delivery that had the aim of reducing unplanned admissions was being found to be difficult. Engagement was necessary to get the target group of men involved, so that they took up the service that everyone agreed was the best way to reduce demand in the future.

Communication is key, but it is just an umbrella word. Below it, people must understand how they will do communication, why they are doing it and why it will give them the right outcome.

Mark McAteer: I will make a general observation on communications. If, over the years in which I have worked with public authorities, I had been given a fiver every time a member of staff said to me, "Where do I fit in?", my bank balance would be competing with that of Mr Trump, with whom we happen to be sharing the Parliament building. That question remains one of the most fundamental issues.

How do we get staff and others across the community to buy in? The SOA and outcomes

approach really helps with that, because clarifying for people the end result that we are after helps them to start to understand what they are doing and how it fits in, and how that fits in with others. In that sense, whether people are co-located in a shared building is almost irrelevant. People ask how they, their team's activities and their service fit in. If the communication message on that is right, it becomes incredibly important.

I have recently done work with the group in Edinburgh to reduce hate crime. We started with the outcomes for a safer Edinburgh and worked back from them. We asked what they meant in terms of hate crime and specifically what they meant for the group as partners over the next three to five years. We asked what contribution each partner should make and how we and they as partners would know that they were achieving the goals. Going through that journey with people helped them to understand that what they do day to day is about the longer-term outcomes for Edinburgh and therefore to understand how they fit in and why what they do matters not simply day to day for clients but for the city and the community overall.

We need to keep pushing on that critical part of the journey. The statement of ambition raises the game and tells all of us that we need to do more and do it better and that we need to keep the momentum going. Taking staff with us on the journey will be important.

Margaret Mitchell: Bob Christie is last but not least.

Bob Christie: As others have said, the key to communication is relevance. In the same way as we must unpick a national outcome to see its local dimension and the local priorities for a community, communities need to have a better understanding of the finer grain of what a CPP-wide outcome means for them and how it reflects their local needs. If an outcome is relevant to a community, people will be engaged. Similarly, if the workforce understands its potential contribution to solving a negative outcome, it will be more engaged.

The Convener: Members have no further questions. Would David Martin like to make closing remarks?

David Martin: I thank the committee for taking the time to hear from us. The session has been most enjoyable and a privilege.

As a member of the returning officer community, I encourage everybody in the room to use their vote in the local government elections.

The Convener: Thank you for all your evidence.

11:49

Meeting suspended.

11:51

On resuming—

Subordinate Legislation

Town and Country Planning (Continuation in force of Local Plans) (Highland) (Scotland) Order 2012 (SSI 2012/90)

The Convener: Our next item of business is consideration of an order. Members have a paper from the clerks that sets out the order's purpose, which is to continue in force certain provisions of existing local plans for the Highlands area. The note from the clerks highlights comments that the Subordinate Legislation Committee made on the order.

No further parliamentary procedure is required on the Scottish statutory instrument and we are required only to note it. As no members have comments, is the committee content to note the order and the Subordinate Legislation Committee's comments?

Members *indicated agreement.*

11:51

Meeting continued in private until 12:32.

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

Available in e-format only. Printed Scottish Parliament documentation is published in Edinburgh by APS Group Scotland.

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk

For details of documents available to
order in hard copy format, please contact:
APS Scottish Parliament Publications on 0131 629 9941.

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000
Textphone: 0800 092 7100
Email: sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

e-format first available
ISBN 978-1-4061-8748-9

Revised e-format available
ISBN 978-1-4061-8761-8

Printed in Scotland by APS Group Scotland
