



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

JUSTICE SUB-COMMITTEE ON POLICING

Thursday 2 May 2013

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JUSTICE SUB-COMMITTEE ON POLICING

4th Meeting 2013, Session 4

CONVENER

*Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)

*Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD)

*Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con)

*Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab)

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Vic Emery (Scottish Police Authority)

Martin Leven (Scottish Police Authority)

Andrea Quinn (Scottish Police Authority)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Joanne Clinton

LOCATION

Committee Room 4

Scottish Parliament

Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Thursday 2 May 2013

[The Convener opened the meeting at 13:38]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Christine Grahame): I welcome everyone to the fourth meeting of the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing. I am sorry that we have had a delay because we cannot sit while a members' business debate continues. As I have said to the witnesses informally, I intend to stop at 2.20 pm because of the motion of condolence for one of our colleagues.

The circumstances are unusual, but we will review our practices to see whether we can schedule in more time to get a bit of elasticity in our meetings and not have them truncated. The witnesses have all made a huge effort to get here and I do not want anybody to waste their time coming along.

Because of the situation, we will focus only on certain areas. They will not include the new custody arrangements—Mr Crerar can leave now if he likes—because there are interim arrangements in place. We thought that, if one thing had to come off the agenda because of the situation today, that would be it. However, we are certainly happy to write to Mr Crerar with questions for him to address.

I ask everyone to switch off mobile phones and other electronic devices completely, as they interfere with the broadcasting equipment even when they are switched to silent.

We have apologies from Kevin Stewart.

Agenda item 1 is a decision on taking business in private. We must decide whether to consider our work programme in private at our next meeting. That includes consideration of how we set about arranging our business. Are we agreed to take that in private?

Members indicated agreement.

Scottish Police Authority

13:40

The Convener: Our main item is an evidence-taking session on complaints handling, information and communication technology, and the scheme of arrangement between the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland. I will leave out the bit about independent custody visiting, because we will not deal with that today.

I welcome the witnesses from the SPA: Vic Emery, the chair; Andrea Quinn, the interim chief executive; Martin Leven, the chief information officer; and Alastair Crerar, strategy, policy and performance officer.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind): Information technology has always been a challenge for the police service. The Bichard inquiry south of the border picked up on difficulties with it. What is the extent of the IT challenges that are involved in marrying the forces in the various parts of Scotland?

Andrea Quinn (Scottish Police Authority): Thank you for the invitation to give evidence.

I will start with the bigger challenge of ICT. Prior to 1 April, there were eight disparate ICT systems throughout the country serving the eight forces. The Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland intended, and made best endeavours, to have national systems that talked to one another and for which it controlled the investment and strategy. With the investment that was available, that happened where possible, but obviously not on a huge scale.

The first challenge that we inherit is to put together an ICT strategy for an integrated system, because that is how we will start to unlock the benefits of police reform. Investment will be required. That must sit as part of an overall ICT strategy. It makes life much easier that the SPA now looks to provide that strategy and support to the single force. That strategy is in preparation.

I ask Martin Leven to give a flavour of some of the technical challenges.

Martin Leven (Scottish Police Authority): As Andrea Quinn said, the current ICT environment is based, through best intention, on eight separate networks providing information to eight separate constabularies. Information was shared through some token national systems that were built through the duration of the Scottish Police Services Authority as the provider of ICT to the police.

We are at the start of the journey of bringing those things together. ICT is the enabler that can

unlock many of the efficiencies that we seek from the single police service. The ICT focus over the past year has been 100 per cent on delivering operational policing on day 1, and we have successfully achieved that.

We had 14 significant and independent national projects to deliver. We now have a single finance system. We have human resources systems throughout the country that talk to one another. We have a new core part of a national network. That will be the launch pad for bringing more things into the network in the future. We delivered the 101 service, which went live in February as a soft launch for 1 April. We have delivered a national intranet and a national internet system. We have a national email system.

We have delivered a lot of what it was possible to deliver for day 1. Now, our focus is 100 per cent on delivering an interim strategy to set a direction. After that, we will carry out a properly thought-through and consulted full ICT strategy.

13:45

John Finnie: Clearly, there was communication between the constituent parts of what is now the single service, and that can be built on. Is there a pecking order? Do you have a plan that you can share with us? I hear that you have a unified HR system, which is good if it means that people get paid, but operational policing should be the priority, which is what I want. Who makes the decisions? How are the priorities established?

Andrea Quinn: I guess that the strategy is built solely on the needs of operational policing. To be fair, although the HR system might sound a bit back office, without it, the chief constable could not schedule his forces, for example.

In our initial discussions with the chief constable and one of his deputy chief constables, we have asked for and received a shopping list of what is, for example, essential and desirable. Two issues have come from that. The first is what systems are required; the second is the infrastructure that Martin Leven mentioned that those things need to sit on, which needs to be robust and resilient. That strategy will be worked on jointly. The SPA or Martin Leven's team would certainly not pull together the plan alone; it must be exactly what is required for policing, because that is the purpose of the ICT.

Investment is a restriction, and we need to consider how much money is available to spend on what. The spending on ICT is not the only challenge—we must look more widely across the whole financial challenge that policing faces. If the authority and the chief constable believe that certain things are essential, those will be prioritised. However, the cloth will have to be cut

to suit because, as John Finnie is aware, there is a significant savings gap that must be met.

John Finnie: Policing is cross border. What liaison, if any, is there on IT compatibility with other countries in the United Kingdom and Europe? The Bichard inquiry was about information sharing.

Andrea Quinn: I will ask Martin Leven to contribute to that, as he is a member of the UK-wide group.

Martin Leven: We operate closely on IT with the 43 forces down south, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the British Transport Police. We collaborate on a number of national systems that are used widely in Scotland and are hosted down south, at a data centre outside London.

On national strategy, we are the second largest police force in the UK and we have a significant manor. We are part of the IT decision-making process.

Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab): I thank the witnesses for making the effort to come through.

Earlier this week, the Justice Committee took evidence from police witnesses on the Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Bill, which is passing through Parliament. The bill proposes that responsibilities be placed on the police to keep victims and witnesses up to date on their cases. When I asked the witnesses about Police Scotland's ability to deliver on the responsibilities that the bill would give it, one said:

"our ability to share information across the various areas of Police Scotland is not joined up at the moment."—
[*Official Report, Justice Committee*, 30 April 2013; c 2709.]

The witness from the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents said, "It is a challenge."

Our current panel represents around 10 years' experience in the SPSA and the SPA. Andrea Quinn has, collectively, with her five years' experience with the SPSA and now through the SPA, an understanding of what is happening and where the service has been going. The legislation on a single police force has been two years in the making. Therefore, perhaps she can understand my frustration—I know that many others are frustrated, too—about the vision and strategy document, how the options are costed and the ability of the SPA to deliver, through a plan, on the ICT function.

Where are you with the document that sets out the business of delivering information technology to the service in a joined-up fashion? Is that costed? What timescales are you operating to? The worry about finance has been indicated, but it is entirely a matter for the board to allocate what it

wants to allocate within the £1.4 billion or whatever to deal with the various priorities. Where are you with the plan? When will we be able to see it in writing?

Andrea Quinn: I will give an overview and then ask Martin Leven to talk specifically about witnesses and victims.

On where we are with the plan, this afternoon we are having a working group meeting with authority members to take them through a draft blueprint. Everything that I said earlier stands. We have been able to produce the strategy since 1 April. We have worked with the Police Service of Scotland to identify its priorities and needs, and there has certainly been a lot of discussion about that over the past couple of weeks, and probably months. This afternoon, we will show members the blueprint and discuss it.

At the meeting on, I think, 10 April, I made a commitment to the SPA board that we would bring it an ICT strategy for approval in June at the latest. I did not say May, because we need to go round the circle a little bit with the Police Service of Scotland to ensure that we have captured absolutely everything. Mr Pearson gave the example of victims and witnesses. We must ensure that we have all the latest requirements in the shopping list from the Police Service of Scotland. There is a bit of work to do in the coming weeks to get the strategy to the June meeting.

On the intention, I would describe the strategy as being a little bit like a local authority plan. A development plan that shows a number of developments and buildings will go to an authority. That plan will not show the individual business cases for those buildings or request that planning permission be approved for them; rather, it will set out a vision of where people are heading. When we take the strategy to the board, it will show the vision in respect of where we think the costs are. I will make a split between the systems that the police require and the infrastructure on which they will sit, which needs to be resilient. The plan will show that in its entirety, and that will allow board members to decide where they want to spend money and whether ICT is one of the priority areas as they set out their financial strategy for the next few years.

That is the timeline. I will pause there. Have I answered everything that you want to know about the timeline? If I have, perhaps we can go into specifics.

Graeme Pearson: The difficulty that you place me in is that the dates that you have given me are recent. We knew for two years that a single police force was coming, and I know that there has been a deal of lobbying from within the service about what it requires in the new single police force

environment. Its requirements have been in print for over a year. I understand the notion of a development plan, but when will we get a fully fleshed-out business case that the board can look at and say, "Right; let's press a button and do this," or whatever?

Andrea Quinn: For particular significant investments, I expect that there will be a separate business case. In respect of individual projects, if we need to build something specific to deal with the issue that you have raised and a significant amount of money is involved, a separate business case will come to the authority.

Graeme Pearson: I presume that you need to have an end result in mind to ensure that what you buy now will fit into that. You need to get to the end result and work backwards to the individual bits. When will you have the end-result business case prepared, so that you can buy the various packages that make it up?

Andrea Quinn: That will be in June.

Graeme Pearson: So you will have that fleshed out in June.

Andrea Quinn: As I said, that will be an outline and a vision, and it will have an idea of the investment profiles. There will not be a request for funding at that stage. Individual business cases will come forward.

You said that we have had two years to do this but, actually, we have not. We had a new command team, and it is important that the new chief constable and his command team set the requirements that we will meet with a strategy. Although we had a collective vision of eight forces, my view is that the chief constable and his command team must specify to us what they need. Some of that will be the same as what has gone before. Certainly, the Audit Scotland review and the review by Mott MacDonald that the Scottish Government kicked off are in the public domain. We supported all the reviews' recommendations, particularly the one about policing deciding its strategy and what it is trying to achieve so that we as a supplier can provide that.

I agree that there have been external requirements, but the requirements must have the stamp of the current chief constable and his command team, so that we know that they match the shape of the operation that he is building.

Graeme Pearson: Perhaps Martin Leven can give us an idea of when we will get to the point when the board sits down to look at the detail and decide about spend. Until you put a price to things, nothing will move.

Martin Leven: I share your frustration about some of the current situations. I will break down the issue into the sections that you just spoke

about, which are prioritisation and strategy, and how that ties in. Reform has been on the agenda for quite a while. Last year, working incredibly collaboratively with our customers across the eight police forces in what was the police reform team, we produced our list of priorities, which formed the day 1 requirements for operational policing going forward. Every request that came in from every area in Scotland went through what we called rapid early assessment: we asked whether we would invest time in scoping it or whether it could wait until after day 1 because it would not make a massively significant difference to delivering operational policing and keeping people safe.

That delivered a programme of 14 areas of work, which were all completed on time. The handling of the programme was very publicly complimented by the chief constable. We have a different governance arrangement from the one that Mr Pearson was perhaps used to in his time in policing, and from the arrangement for ICT in the SPSA. I sit on the senior management team as a guest, with the chief constable, the deputy chief constable and the senior management, as well as sitting on the SPA executive. We have a new arena of collaboration that means that we are working together closely.

On prioritisation, it is all about delivering operational policing and keeping people safe. Our entire aim is to ensure that the police have the tools at their disposal to make their job easier.

We need a couple of bits of information to set an ICT strategy: the exact shape of the organisation and the organisation's strategy. ICT is an enabler; we cannot let the tail wag the dog if we want to move forward. We are an absolute enabler. The blueprint that Andrea Quinn mentioned, which is being presented this afternoon to the authority, involves another bit of complete collaboration, with Deputy Chief Constable Neil Richardson and his team on their exact priorities. It is based around the operational policing priorities from the Police Scotland strategy document and what ICT will enable in those requirements.

In the ICT arena, exact pricing is difficult, because there is such massive scoping. As I am sure members are all aware, procurement exercises in the public sector can add lots of money to the price of things. However, we certainly anticipate that we will be able to identify the year 1 costs very soon and the 10-year costs for certain aspects of the application delivery. At present, we are finalising the infrastructure and the systems that will enable that. If you imagine ICT as being a wall, the bottom of the wall has infrastructure, which is the wires, the switches and the communications; then the systems sit on top of that: the servers and desktop computers with

Windows operating systems, for example, applications—

Graeme Pearson: With respect, I understand all—

The Convener: No. I needed that. You might have understood it.

Graeme Pearson: But for the purposes of what we are trying to do just now, I am still looking for the end or goal in order to work back from it. I still do not have an indication of broad timescales in which you say, for example, "We hope to have a business case by the end of summer; we hope to begin to go out to market and to do things; and we hope to begin to give the service what it needs."

I want to hear about the joined-up part—the bit that John Finnie referred to—that allows officers across the country to communicate and do their business well. I also want to hear about the bit that allows victims to know that they will not be asked 400 times what their name, date of birth and address is, because the system will give that information. What is the calendar frame for that? Nobody seems to be aware. Everything that you said to me just now was said four or five years ago, two years ago and last year. When do we begin to cut the turf and get in there?

14:00

Martin Leven: As we said, we are meeting the authority this afternoon to present the blueprint.

Graeme Pearson: Have the police signed up to that blueprint?

Martin Leven: I will be delivering it with Neil Richardson this afternoon at the authority meeting.

Graeme Pearson: So we might hear about that in the next few weeks or months.

Martin Leven: Potentially, we will. I will leave it to the authority and my colleagues to decide the filtering part.

Vic Emery (Scottish Police Authority): We are trying to do exactly what Graeme Pearson described. We need a strategy. The police need to be the intelligent customer and tell us what the end game is and what they want. They cannot always describe the technology that will enable what we want at the end—that is what the clever guys do. However, the strategy lays out all the programmes and things that need to be done to become what I hope will be the best police force in the UK and perhaps Europe, which is our aim.

The strategy is being worked out between what I would call the intelligent customer and the people who are charged to deliver it. That will be divided and annualised. We will look at costs and the money that we need each year to deliver the

strategy, which will need to be bounced against our budget. There needs to be a business case for each part of the strategy, so that if we spend, say, £20 million, we can say how much we will get back.

Graeme Pearson: This is a bit technical and many members might not know the concept. The service has requested i6 information technology, which is about being the intelligent customer. I do not know the detail, but a tendering process has been gone through and so forth. Is that the intelligent customer requirement? If it is there, why are we not getting on with it?

Vic Emery: The i6 programme is but one part of the overall strategy. Do not take my word for this, because I do not know, but I think that i6 is not a single thing, but about five or six parts, all of which fit into the strategy. We need to know how and where they fit, and we need the infrastructure—the bottom of the wall, if you like—built before we can do other things. The strategy should lay out how it all fits together. Quite rightly, the board wants to know—as one would—what the strategy is and where we are going.

Graeme Pearson: Will that start this afternoon?

Vic Emery: We will ask that. We will be reviewing a draft paper this afternoon. In that “we” I include Deputy Chief Constable Neil Richardson, who has been instrumental in putting together the strategy with Martin Leven.

Graeme Pearson: Thank you. Convener, I am conscious of the time.

The Convener: You will have to talk to me later about i6.

Graeme Pearson: I will; I look forward to it.

The Convener: I am bewildered, but then I am quite often bewildered. Margaret Mitchell is not.

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): Thank you very much. Good afternoon. It would be helpful to set the funding parameters, if you do not mind. I appreciate that with eight forces and their different systems, funding was incredibly complex. Do you have an opinion on the Government’s current estimate for the outline business case, which includes £12 million over three years towards an integrated system? Is that a realistic or reasonably accurate amount?

Andrea Quinn: You have heard me give evidence to the Justice Committee about that. My evidence then was that the amount has been underestimated—we certainly believed that at the time. Once the blueprinting strategy has been agreed, it will show that the amount has been underestimated, with regard to the very high-level figures and high-level estimates that we have looked at to date. What should the number be? I

do not know, but that is what the strategy will tell us. Look at an external company and its turnover: what would it invest in ICT? Martin Leven can probably tell you, but in our professional view it would be a lot more than £12 million over three years.

Margaret Mitchell: There is an opportunity for you to put forward that view very early on.

Vic Emery: We are not in the middle, but we are part of the way on the journey of understanding where all our finances are and what we can do with them. For example, we have inherited—for want of a better word—a huge estate of property. We do not need all of it. If we were to dispose of some of it, we could put some of that money into systems that would give us more benefits. We cannot answer the questions until we understand the end-to-end situation.

It is fair to say that, in isolation, £12 million over three years will not buy the information technology systems that we want, but savings could be made in order to supplement that budget, which would make some things much more viable.

Margaret Mitchell: Given the kinds of problems that have beset other public—

The Convener: Did you want Mr Leven to provide ballpark figures?

Margaret Mitchell: I think you said that you have an estimate for this year and for a further 10 years.

Martin Leven: It would be premature to give exact figures, but I will give an example. The budget that the SPSA operated to maintain a steady state—that is, to keep the lights on and the IT systems working—came to about £3.5 million a year. If we are going to invest significantly in IT infrastructure, we are talking about more than £12 million over three years.

Margaret Mitchell: Other public sector ICT programmes have had lots of management problems; the 2012 Audit Scotland reports highlighted that the Crown Office, Disclosure Scotland and Registers of Scotland had ICT programmes worth about £133 million that had been cancelled or delayed. Can any lessons be learned from that?

Andrea Quinn: Governance is highlighted in those reports. It is important to set specifications at the beginning, to manage changes that happen along the route and to have proper programme management and project management skills in the team.

Last week, Vic Emery and I met the Scottish Government’s ICT digital strategy team to talk about how we could collaborate better. We talked about assurance, the need to learn lessons and

the need to ensure that, as we are investing public funds, we do so with confidence and with the right people and skill sets in place. Police officers should specify requirements and technical people should build whatever the systems should be. That is exactly how Martin Leven intends to govern in relation to ICT. In fact, he has included a new governance team within his function.

Martin Leven: Reports that describe the failures in ICT point to lack of governance, lack of programme control and lack of benefits realisation in the projects.

I joined the SPSA last January, and one of the immediate things that I identified to Andrea Quinn and the executive was the requirement to create an ICT governance function. At that time, there was no such independent function and no assurance with regard to how certain projects were run.

We have pulled together that governance function and have seen some real benefits. For example, when we have had systems failures in the past year—it may not be wise to bring that up, but like all IT systems we have systems failures—the fact that we have a governance system in place has enabled us to respond to them confidently. We have been able to react appropriately and communicate correctly. Most important is that we have been able to learn what went wrong and change operational practices as a result of that.

The important thing is communication and collaboration with the customer. If we decide that we are going to do something, we have to specify it correctly and document that specification. If we want to change the specification, we have to document that, in accordance with good governance. At every stage of a project we should be validating exactly where we are in that project through peer review and external audit. We plan to have all those things in place in the governance function.

Margaret Mitchell: It is encouraging that checks and balances will be in place.

Vic Emery: Your question is valid and relates to the question that Graeme Pearson asked previously, because one of Audit Scotland's primary recommendations was that people should say what their strategy is and where they want to end up. We are setting out our strategy so that we understand where we need to end up, how we will get there, and over what time and at what cost.

The Convener: I will let Alison McInnes in next. I am happy to keep to the same topic because we will not do justice to the other topics in the time that we have left. We will write with questions on other topics, which members will have the

opportunity to ask through the clerks. There is still time to address the issue of IT.

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): You are right, convener. We need to continue to explore this issue.

In order to realise some of the significant benefits that you say you will get from a single police force, it is necessary to share operational intelligence across the country. It is fairly clear already that you anticipate the need for much more expenditure on that than was set down in the outline business case. Have you had discussions with the Government about whether additional capital funding is available to invest in that? I hear what Mr Emery says about there being lots of buildings around the country, but disposal of buildings, even when there is community acceptance of that, takes a long time. I am getting worried about how elastic the implementation of that is, as it seems to be quite an important piece of work.

Andrea Quinn: You asked whether we have spoken to the Scottish Government about funding. I have a dialogue with my sponsor department generally about all funding, because I am the accountable officer. All the revenue and capital sits with me, and I work with the chief constable on how the work will be budgeted for. The discussions that we have had to date about additional funding have focused on the original police reform budget—you might remember the discussions about that in the Justice Committee—and there is still funding available this year from the outline business case for police reform. In that budget there was an estimate for ICT, and it was that figure that we talked about earlier.

The sponsor department wants to see an overall financial strategy from me, as the accountable officer, so that I can access some of that investment. So, the first thing that we need to do is get a complete financial strategy. We set the high-level budget at the meeting on 28 March and we now have to set the budget at the next level down. The chief constable is busy looking at that with his command team at the moment. That financial strategy will include all the savings that we are required to make to plug the gap. We will then be able to look at ICT within the whole picture. The authority could decide that it wants to take money from somewhere else and invest it in ICT. There will be discussion about that. Vic Emery made an important point about spend to save. The authority may choose to make an investment now because the payback will pay dividends.

All that is flexible and elastic—as it has to be. You are right about capital receipts and how and when they may be achieved. Also, you must look at both capital and revenue spend together because things that are built with capital money

may have a revenue impact on licensing and so on for ICT. The situation is fluid, as it should be. It is right that the authority is able to decide how it needs to invest in order to get the best police service and support that we can.

Graeme Pearson: You have covered part of one of my questions for Vic Emery. It will be within the gift of the board to make business judgments if it has only £12 million in the profile but more needs to be invested. That will be a matter for board members to decide over the coming months. That question has been answered—I presume that you agree with Andrea Quinn's response.

Vic Emery: I absolutely agree, but I add the caveat that we would not do that without absolutely having taken cognisance of where the chief constable and the police want to go. To a large extent, they will determine their priorities.

Graeme Pearson: I understand that. There is not much point in having a new police authority if it cannot make those big decisions. That is what it is all about.

I challenge somewhat the nature of the intelligent customer that you talked about earlier and the need to involve the current executive and so forth. It is obvious that there must be relationships. We spoke about relationships between the board and Police Scotland at earlier meetings, and I do not doubt that we will revisit that issue at some time in the future.

However, at the end of the day, it is about how a service to the public is provided. God forbid that your executive suddenly walked away tomorrow morning, but the next executive would not come in and say, "No. We don't want any of that stuff you've got. We want this stuff." Generic requirements for the single police force will bring all the benefits. As someone who has supported the concept for a long time, I am on your side from that point of view. However, we need to move forward with ICT delivery.

14:15

We still await a report on the outcomes of the performance platform project, which does not augur well for delivery of future projects. I understand about proper governance and that it is very necessary, but I am sure that if you were to go back to previous office-bearers, they would say that they had had proper governance.

On the sense of frustration, I hope that after the SPA meeting this afternoon, we will begin to see some flesh on the bones that will give what they need—I am lucky enough not to need any more to go out at 11 o'clock at night and do the street work—to the 20,000-odd officers who are out

there doing it for us. It seems to me that the guy who comes and fixes my washing machine has better IT support for his product delivery than we have for police officers who do the business on the street. That is wrong, and it should be the big priority for the board.

Vic Emery: I do not disagree with any of that. We need to work with the police; we are working closely with them so that they can deliver their obligations to us so that we can deliver our obligations to you and the public.

On the performance platform project, again, there was no assurance system that asked whether what was being done would work or would deliver on the requirements that had been set out. Martin Leven said earlier that there must be a structured process that says what we are trying to do, how we will do it and how we will check it.

We need business cases for each element of the ICT structure that is to be delivered in the strategy, and each element needs independent assurance that it is deliverable. Martin Leven will be delivering it and therefore has his skin in the game, so we need someone who does not have his or her skin in the game to look at things and say whether something will work or will not fly, which would therefore mean making changes. All those things are in our programme.

Graeme Pearson: As you acknowledged about those considerations, history has taught us that they are moveable feasts, so that what we think fits the bill just now will have changed by September and will change again a year in September. Eventually, you have to freeze the system and get it delivered. I am sure that many people would accept the notion of getting it right in an 80:20 proportion—you need to make that step or you will never have a national system.

Vic Emery: On that, again, we violently agree with each other.

Graeme Pearson: Never be violent, Vic.

Vic Emery: We need to ensure that what is being specified will deliver what we want it to deliver. We need an assurance that that will be the case, because it has not been the case in the past. As you and I both know, if I were to build a house and give a different direction to my builder halfway through, it would cost me a fortune and probably would not even deliver what I wanted in the first place. So, we need to be mindful—

Graeme Pearson: You will understand our frustration—or, rather, mine; I had better not speak for other members.

The Convener: Mr Leven wants to come in on this point. I am going to stop the meeting in a minute. It is just one of those days.

Martin Leven: I hope that I can provide some comfort on the change and how we are doing things now. The performance platform project is a good example of where it can go wrong. However, there was successful delivery of 14 national day 1 projects in incredibly tight timescales, and the size of them should not be underplayed. One of the projects was a national management information system, completely specified, built from scratch with very tight project management and successfully delivered for 1 April, with multiple resources.

Graeme Pearson: I think that you would acknowledge that the scale of the challenge in that regard is different from what we are talking about regarding the next generation of delivering a joined-up system.

The last thing I want to say—in particular to Vic Emery, given that he is the chair—is that the frustration that I feel is because regularly over the past couple of years, the meeting that was going to give us the information that we needed was always just after our meeting. It would be great if you could give me some more sleepful nights by helping me to understand where we are going, because I think that it is important.

The Convener: Thank you. You will understand that we all want to give Graeme Pearson a good night's sleep, but perhaps it is up to us to find out in advance when you are having your meetings so that we can schedule our questions for after your meeting. We will send additional questions to you in writing. I encourage committee members to give their questions to the clerks. We would not normally want to rush things like this, but I think that we have given IT at least a reasonable airing. Thank you very much.

Meeting closed at 14:20.

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