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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

JUSTICE SUB-COMMITTEE ON POLICING

Thursday 27 June 2013

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JUSTICE SUB-COMMITTEE ON POLICING

8th 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:

Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP)

Vic Emery (Scottish Police Authority)

Chief Constable Sir Stephen House QPM (Police Scotland)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Joanne Clinton

LOCATION

Committee Room 6

Scottish Parliament

Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Thursday 27 June 2013

[The Convener opened the meeting at 13:02]

Information and Communication Technology

The Convener (Christine Grahame): Welcome to the eighth meeting of the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing. I ask everyone to completely switch off mobile phones and other electronic devices as they interfere with the broadcasting system even when switched to silent. No apologies have been received. I welcome Rod Campbell to the meeting.

Our first item of business is an evidence session on information and communication technology provision. We have received written responses from the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland to our questions on certain key issues that arose from our previous evidence sessions on ICT provision. Those responses were circulated to members yesterday and have been published on the web. Hard copies have also been tabled.

I welcome to the meeting Vic Emery, chair of the SPA, and Sir Stephen House, chief constable of Police Scotland. Sir Stephen, I must congratulate you on your award but I think that I will call you “chief constable” as that will be easier than the other forms of address.

Given the time available today, I want to keep our evidence session on ICT provision to around 30 minutes. I seem to be getting looks from members—are you happy with that? Well, you are probably not happy, but are you agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: I simply want to allow enough time for our second item on recent developments and would therefore be grateful if we could avoid unnecessarily lengthy questions and answers. Although we have dispensation just now to sit when Parliament itself is sitting, that extends only to 2.10 pm. We must conclude our business by then, even if that means switching off the microphones. I know that the timetable is tight, but it will keep us focused.

I invite questions from members.

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): I will be as quick as I can be, convener. My questions are about the i6 project, which I believe was discussed at yesterday’s SPA board meeting. Can

the chair of the SPA and the chief constable update us on the issue? How much is i6 projected to cost and what cash and efficiency savings is it projected to deliver over its lifetime? Can you also highlight the operational benefits—

The Convener: Just one question at a time, please.

Kevin Stewart: I am just trying to get them aa in, convener.

The Convener: You will be able to do so. What was your first question again?

Kevin Stewart: I believe that the board discussed the i6 project yesterday. Can you provide an update, gentlemen?

Vic Emery (Scottish Police Authority): Yes, i6 was discussed at yesterday’s board meeting and was approved to go forward for the Scottish Government’s agreement. I believe that a meeting is taking place today to discuss the best way of doing that.

Yesterday, we had a closed session to allow us to thoroughly examine and deal with the commercial matters and the contractor itself. As such issues are commercially confidential, they could not be discussed in public. However, we then had a further meeting in the afternoon to deal with the i6 business case. At the conclusion of those two sessions on i6, the project was approved to go forward. Some items need clarification, but Police Scotland has taken those in hand and will provide us with some answers.

Kevin Stewart: I do not know whether the chief constable wishes to comment.

The Convener: People are just self-nominating, chief constable. If you wish to comment, please do so.

Chief Constable Sir Stephen House QPM (Police Scotland): I do not have a great deal to add. For the sake of accuracy, I should make it clear that I was not at the pre-meeting at which the full business case for i6 was discussed because, unfortunately, I had other commitments; Neil Richardson was present instead. However, I was at the authority meeting at which the matter was discussed in public and agree entirely with Vic Emery’s comments about the status of the project.

Kevin Stewart: How much is i6 projected to cost and what cash and efficiency savings is it projected to deliver over its lifetime?

Vic Emery: There is an economic case that has additional costs, but the financial case projects that over the next 10 years the project will cost about £46 million.

Kevin Stewart: And what about the efficiency and cash savings?

Vic Emery: The chief constable might know, although I believe that the cashable savings amount to £61.69 million. The non-cashable savings are much in excess of that, but that is the figure for the cashable savings.

Chief Constable House: I am able to tell you this only because I have the table in front of me. As has been stated, the cashable savings are just over £61 million. The total cashable and non-cashable savings are reckoned to amount to £218 million, again over 10 years.

Kevin Stewart: Can you outline i6's operational benefits?

Chief Constable House: Yes. There are many and, in my view, they represent probably the most significant benefits for operational policing. As far as crime recording is concerned, i6 will put on to a single system the eight legacy forces and other agencies across Scotland that, at the moment, are on a variety of different crime systems. For example, the Strathclyde legacy system is decades old and should have been replaced some while ago, but the decision was taken in Strathclyde not to replace it but to wait for what we hoped would be i6.

Not only will i6 put everyone on the system for crime recording purposes, but it will be a searchable database. Coming right up to date, it will allow us to pay far more attention to our obligations to victims than we can at the moment with our existing information technology. The existing Strathclyde system and indeed most of the other existing crime recording systems are so old that we would not be able to comply with the upcoming legislation on victims; they just do not contain the fields to allow us to do that. i6 takes that fully on board.

That is just one example. There are many others.

Kevin Stewart: I have previously mentioned the failure of the platform project and note that a pretty critical report on it was published last week. What lessons can be learned from that for the development of i6 and how will you ensure that the same scenario does not happen again?

Chief Constable House: I am happy to take a shot at that. When that project was commissioned in 2006, it was of its time. Effectively, as the name suggests, it was designed to bring together the 10 constituent forces and agencies into a single platform. To a large extent, it was overtaken by events; after all, we are now one organisation.

You would expect me to say this but it is a fact so I will say it anyway: I was not involved in the platform project and do not know a huge amount about it. However, I know that if it existed now it would be pretty much irrelevant because of

structural changes and the political decision to introduce a single service.

I cannot say what it was that went wrong, but I can comment on programme assurance for i6. i6 has been through a gateway 2 check, a health check review mid-point, and then a gateway 3 review as recently as 13 March this year, which was the investment decision point. It has complied with all the statutory requirements in relation to project management. Indeed, it has been praised and highlighted as a very well-run project. I do not think that any debate or discussion about whether to go ahead with i6 has ever been based on the project not being clear and well run. Such discussions have been based around an investment decision, effectively, and whether enough money was available.

Kevin Stewart: We have heard about the gateway checks and so on, which I welcome, but it bothers me a little bit that the chief constable says that he does not know where platform went wrong. One would have thought that the lessons that needed to be learned after the massive failure of platform meant that the history of that project would have been gone over with a fine-tooth comb to ensure that the flaws that emerged during the course of the project did not re-emerge when i6 was being dealt with. Perhaps Mr Emery can tell us more about—

Chief Constable House: Can I respond to that? I do not think that that is quite fair. I said that I was not involved in the platform project—and I was not involved in any shape or form, so I cannot speak about what went wrong on a daily basis. We have read the report by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary for Scotland, and we understand the issues. I have spoken personally with Neil Richardson, the senior responsible officer, or SRO, and Alec Hippman, who is the senior person involved on a day-to-day basis. They have gone through the platform report with a fine-tooth comb, and they do not recognise the governance applied to platform compared with what has been applied to i6. They are two totally different things.

i6 has passed all the tests that it has been asked to pass. It has complied with all the regulations, and it is seen as fit for purpose as a project. We have read the platform report and we understand that there are things that went wrong with that project, but those are not things that are associated with i6. We know that platform was a failing—it was a waste of public money, and we can see all that—but the reality is that we do not believe that that is where i6 is at all.

Kevin Stewart: We need to continue to keep an eye on that. Perhaps we can get some information back at each of the gateway stages to ensure that we do not have the same situation happening again as happened with platform.

Vic Emery: If you—

The Convener: I want to pick you up on something first, Mr Emery—I had thought that Kevin Stewart might return to it.

In your answer about the £46 million cost of i6, I think you said that there are other associated economic costs. Could you tell me what those are and how much they are?

Vic Emery: One of the items is the redundancy cost. As you have probably heard, the cost of maintaining the existing systems is almost as much as that of doing i6, which is another clear driver for doing the project. The financial case does not take account of the redundancies that are needed. If all the systems are not being maintained, all the people involved will not be needed in future. Not immediately, but in future years—over the next 10 years—there will be redundancies, particularly in the ICT area, as a result of i6. The costs of those redundancies are in the economic case, although they are not in the financial case for justifying the project.

The Convener: They appear on a balance sheet, then.

Vic Emery: They will appear on a balance sheet, but not yet, because they have not occurred.

The Convener: So, it is just redundancy costs—that is it.

Vic Emery: There is an element for training to implement i6, too.

The Convener: My question was just for clarification. I did not know the answer, the point was not followed up, and I wondered what those costs were.

Vic Emery: I wish also to respond to Kevin Stewart's question on the lessons learned. HMICS basically said that platform did not have good governance, it did not have good project management and it did not come with an assurance that the project would deliver what it said on the tin. All those areas have been covered in i6. The chief constable answered the question very well, but those are the three learning points from platform.

The Convener: Thank you for that. I call Margaret Mitchell, to be followed by John Finnie and Alison McInnes.

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): What progress, if any, has been made in co-ordinating police ICT—software and systems—with fire and rescue and other blue-light services?

13:15

Chief Constable House: I have had a number of discussions with Alasdair Hay, the chief of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. There are a number of areas where we see collaboration and co-operation as possible, and we will meet fairly soon to talk about property and collaborating on buildings. When it comes to ICT, we use the same radio system—airwave—but we operate in slightly different rooms of the airwave house, as it were. We can speak to each other on airwave if we need to, but in general that is not how we do it operationally: we tend to be at the scene together so we can talk face to face. Airwave was jointly purchased for both services, and that may well continue with the next generation—with whatever follows airwave.

The other big area is control rooms, and we are really at the start of that journey. The police currently have 10 control rooms across Scotland, and we are looking to rationalise their number over the next couple of years. I cannot speak for Alasdair Hay, but I know that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is in a similar situation and is looking at rationalising its assets.

The big question—to get to the nub of your point—is whether we are going to look at a joint facility in control rooms. That is a possibility, but it depends on a lot of complexities around the location of control rooms and the age of various assets. Police Scotland is fortunate in many respects, in that a couple of our larger control rooms, at Helen Street in Govan and at Bilston Glen in the east of the country, are very modern indeed—in fact, they are almost state of the art. If we are looking for a bedrock on which to build our control rooms, those two are expensive but useful assets. In the north of the country, we are looking at different possibilities. The Scottish Police Authority will have to take a view on the matter and make a variety of decisions.

Collaboration is possible, and everybody thinks that it is an obvious thing to do. With respect to volume, we could probably do it relatively easily, because we could absorb the volume of calls to the fire service, in the main, without too much trouble. It is a question of the fire service's assets, our assets and where everything is located around the country. I mentioned that we will meet soon to talk about property issues, and that is what we will talk about when we meet.

Margaret Mitchell: What would be your ideal scenario if there were no problems in the way?

Chief Constable House: The ideal scenario, if you were starting with a completely blank page, would involve a number of initiatives whereby you could have a joint emergency services control room that would also reach out into non-

emergency services. For example, the legacy Northern Constabulary control room has a contract with Highlands and Islands Council to handle the council's out-of-hours calls. That seems to me like a sensible thing, because it frees up cost for the council, which does not have to employ shift-work staff in its control rooms. We already have shift-work staff, and have to have them, so effectively it is a transfer of a bit of money from the council's budget to our budget, which I am delighted to see—and it does for both. We could take a wide look at that across the country if we were in an ideal scenario.

We are exploring that issue with a number of councils. Many years ago—about 20 years ago—I visited the States, where police departments handled out-of-hours calls for lots of different agencies, and that was efficient and cost effective. So long as it does not impact on the operational effectiveness of the police, that is something that—in these and future financial circumstances—we have to consider.

Margaret Mitchell: That is helpful. Mr Emery?

Vic Emery: I agree. We support working together with the fire department. In fact, I had a meeting earlier this week with the chair and the chief fire officer, Alasdair Hay. We talked about such things as sharing a health and safety statistics database, and I support what the chief constable said about working together to explore all the areas—not simply in relation to ICT—in which we could co-operate and save money for the public purse.

Margaret Mitchell: Ambulance as well?

Vic Emery: Ambulance as well, yes.

Margaret Mitchell: Thank you.

The Convener: Is it the case that data protection issues would have to be considered in those circumstances?

Vic Emery: Yes, that is the case, up to a point. Software issues are involved in that.

Chief Constable House: Data protection is increasingly being used as an excuse for not doing something, and we need to push the boundaries. We are emergency services, and we are public services. There are always issues—we have data protection issues within the police, so we have to have an awareness of them—but data protection is not a show-stopper.

The Convener: Okay. I just thought that I would mention that point, with my ex-lawyer's hat on.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind): Good afternoon, gentlemen, and thank you for your detailed written responses to the committee. You will recall that I raised the issue of consultation, which you both responded to, and I

am very happy with Mr Emery's response in relation to that.

Chief constable, I do not want to labour the point, but I will quote from your response just for the record. In relation to the i6 programme, you wrote:

"Plans are in place for regular and active consultation with unions and staff associations about the future ... change outcomes of the programme".

Can we just get an assurance that that will be the case—that there will be active consultation? Clearly, there is a difference between having trade union members and staff association members there and actively consulting both the trade unions and the staff associations.

Chief Constable House: You have my assurance. I know that the issue has exercised the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents representative, who was in front of the committee not so long ago. You have my assurance—it is on the record now. I point to recent events. We have introduced a single national service at record speed. I have not heard the Scottish Police Federation or the ASPS say anything about not being involved in that process—they were involved from start to finish. Understandably, the unions have a different position around protecting their members as regards voluntary redundancy and early retirement.

I had a three-hour joint negotiating and consultative committee meeting yesterday with the federation, the ASPS and the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland, or whatever is left of it—in other words, Police Scotland. Another meeting is coming up fairly soon with the unions. Both sets of parties prefer it if those meetings are separate, because their interests do not always align, but we are already into a programme of regular meetings with them.

We have set up a number of working groups and I know from talking to Neil Richardson and Alec Hippman that one of the issues that they are looking at is a redesign of our governance, because we have to make sure that it is fit for purpose and that the Police Authority is happy with it before it puts its governance on us. My assurance is there, but experience shows that that is what we will do anyway.

John Finnie: That is not what we heard in relation to the i6 programme. There was no suggestion of anything other than active involvement in the coming together, if you like, of the single police force. However, with regard to the specifics of the i6 programme, there is a statutory obligation in relation to any substantive changes in the workplace for the unions and staff associations to be actively involved. I am reassured by your answer. We will leave it at that.

On the transitional arrangements, we have a system that has failed us, as we have heard, and we are moving to a new system. Can either witness explain how the transition between the two systems will work? Will a switch literally be thrown on changeover day, or is the transition more involved than that?

Vic Emery: I can attempt to answer that. Are you referring to 1 April?

John Finnie: No, I am referring to the new system that we have been discussing. When will it come into play? How will that work?

Vic Emery: The system will come in progressively. It is a 10-year programme and the majority of the return on the revenue part of it is in three years, I think. I think that the return on the capital element is in about 10 or 11 years—I cannot quite remember the business case. Those are the returns on the two funding streams, but it will probably take about two or three years to get the system up and running fully. The chief constable can provide more detail on that.

Chief Constable House: I had a conversation with Alec Hippman on the phone on the way here, so I can tell you that, as regards implementation, if we get Government approval—and I understand that the contract has to be signed within the next 36 hours—we will have, and I quote, “feet on the ground” from the supplier on Monday and work on implementation and design will begin. The main piece of work is a discussion with the users—police officers and support staff—about how their systems and processes will work with the new technology. As for implementation, the system will start to be switched on in phases from 2015.

There is, of course, a delay—or rather, a stop process—for the Commonwealth games, when we have to freeze everything in ICT and ICT development for a period, so that we can get through the Commonwealth games successfully. We will then start again. That will not be much of an issue, however. The system should start to come online in 2015.

John Finnie: You raised the issue of redundancies, Mr Emery. The Scottish Government tells us that it has a no redundancy policy.

The Convener: No compulsory redundancies.

John Finnie: No compulsory redundancies, I should have said—thank you, convener. Redeployment will be considered before any redundancy. Is that correct?

Vic Emery: Absolutely. We try to retrain and redeploy everyone we can. We are not challenging at all the no compulsory redundancy policy that has been mandated by the Scottish Government. Any redundancies would be voluntary.

John Finnie: If I understood you correctly, the role of the individuals you referred to is in maintenance. Presumably, the new system will also require maintenance. Can you confirm whether maintenance will be done in-house, whether it will be the responsibility of the supplier or whether it will be externally sourced?

Chief Constable House: The answer is that it will be a bit of a mix. As we know, contractors tend to make a lot of their money out of the year-on-year maintenance of a system. Some will be provided by the supplier, and some will be done in-house by our own ICT people.

John Finnie: Is there an opportunity, within that, to come to an arrangement with the external provider so that, if possible, existing staff are used to provide that service?

Chief Constable House: You are getting to a level of detail on the contract that I am not—

John Finnie: Could you perhaps come back to us on that, then?

Chief Constable House: Absolutely. I do not wish to mislead you by taking a guess. Let me come back to you on that matter.

Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab): I have four areas that I wish to cover. The first involves responsibility for the oversight of ICT delivery in Police Scotland. Will the board still maintain hands-on oversight and governance of the various stages for the contract—the implementation stages and so forth? Today's discussion with the Government has been mentioned. Will both the board and Police Scotland play a part in that discussion?

Vic Emery: The discussion today is about the funding streams. The SPA is not a part of that, although we have given our acknowledgement to the meeting going ahead. We are not party to the meeting per se.

As I mentioned when Kevin Stewart raised the first question about i6, one or two items needed to be clarified in relation to our approval. One of those is the need to strengthen the governance of the project. I am sure that we will get on to this in a minute but, while ICT organisation will be reporting to Police Scotland, there will be a governance role for the SPA.

The SPA will ask for assurances. The chief information officer has already written an assurance statement to enable us to get to this point, and we will continue to use that facility. We will be part of the governance structure. As for how that is shaped at the moment, that is one of the actions that we have asked people to come back to us on.

Graeme Pearson: In that connection, who is the accountable officer for policing in Scotland?

Vic Emery: The accountable officer, from a financial point of view, if that is the way you are talking about it, will be—

The Convener: You will get to ask such questions, Graeme, but I want to get through the issues around ICT on their own. You have slipped—

Graeme Pearson: The question is part of the ICT discussion because, at the end of the day, the accountable officer will be responsible for signing off the financial arrangements for the contract.

Vic Emery: The board has agreed the financial arrangements for the contract. The accountable officer is, by statute, the chief executive of the SPA.

Graeme Pearson: That is fine.

You mentioned the report on the platform project, and you discussed the three key lessons to be learned. Page 19 mentions

“A key risk to the successful delivery of the project”,

and says that

“Achieving these savings was conditional on business change processes”.

Is there an active pursuit of business change in the Police Service of Scotland? Will the board be responsible for ensuring that those changes occur?

13:30

Vic Emery: I can answer part of that, although the primary question is for the chief constable. There is an active business change programme, which reports to the designated deputy chief constable, as far as I am aware, and he has staff who deliver all those items.

As a board, we asked yesterday what the strategies are for all of the items that will require change—fleet, ICT, assets, property and so on—because they all have an effect on the finances at the end of the day. The work will be done and controlled by the Police Service of Scotland, but we will have a role in ensuring that the service efficiencies are delivered.

Graeme Pearson: I think that there is an understanding that if you merely put the ICT on top of current practices, the savings that we are looking for will not be achieved. Is that understanding part of your plan, chief constable?

Chief Constable House: Yes, absolutely. Within the organisation, we will market the project not as an ICT project but as a change programme. Within the police service, we have had bad

experiences with ICT and the platform project but, on the contrary, we have had some very good experiences with change programmes that deal with the processes that our people go through.

It is worth emphasising that i6 will cover 80 per cent of the current operational police activity, so it is absolutely massive as far as the organisation is concerned. The six subsystems of it are: crime, vulnerable persons, criminal justice, custody, missing persons, and productions and property. I have just reeled off probably 80 per cent of policing work.

It is absolutely essential that we redesign the processes first and then say, “Here are the processes. We now want you to put an ICT front end on them.” Doing it the other way round will simply mean that the company that is delivering the project will design Police Scotland, and we do not want that. It has to be the other way round.

Graeme Pearson: Will part of that examination seek to enable officers to download information from locations using mobile data, or is that a step too far for you at this stage?

Chief Constable House: The project is certainly compatible with mobile data. Just before this meeting, I had an interesting conversation with a couple of people who are involved in the mobile data pilots that are already running in Police Scotland in different parts of the country—you are probably well aware of those.

I am assured by a number of people that the project is completely compatible with mobile data, but it is not currently factored into the costs—it will be an extra element. I think that, in future, it will be an undeniable element, because thousands of cops throughout Scotland already have a taste for mobile data and it is a much easier way of working.

Vic Emery: Mobile data is a mechanism for uploading and downloading data for the efficient operation of the operative, but it relies heavily on the core data in the system being accurate and up to date—i6 does just that. Mobile data is good and is a step forward, but i6 is the core element in order to ensure that all the data is okay before we move to mobile data.

Graeme Pearson: One final thing—I am sorry to labour this but, having read the platform project review report, can we get an assurance that copies of it will be printed and nailed on to the desks of those who work on i6 so that they read it every morning? Although we are talking about single figure millions of pounds, the prospects are really dangerous if we do not get this right for the future.

Chief Constable House: I take the comment fully on board. I gave an assurance on the record

to the Police Authority yesterday afternoon when it met in Lockerbie that we will be keeping the project under the tightest governance. I am sure that the authority will do so as well. The reality is that both Neil Richardson and I understand how crucial the project is for the future of policing and how important it is to the success of the organisation, so we will clearly be passionately involved in it from now on.

The Convener: Obviously, there is a role for the sub-committee, which will run to the end of the session. We will be watching the watchers, as well as Police Scotland.

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): Finally on ICT, the HMICS report on the platform project makes four recommendations, the third of which is that

“Programme and project management should be recognised as specific skills sets to rank alongside other specialisms.”

In particular, the report recommends

“the establishment of ... a selected cadre of staff who are trained and practised in programme and project management”.

I wonder whether the chief constable can tell me how he is taking that forward as a matter of urgency.

Chief Constable House: We already have a number of senior officers who are fully up to speed and trained in the correct methodology for the management of projects and programmes and I am happy to say that, if we have to train more, we will do so.

I know that we are at a relatively early stage in delivering i6, but the fact is that Neil Richardson and Alec Hippman have been working on and heading up the project for perhaps the past four years. They have managed to get through every single loophole, hurdle and test that has been put in their path and have convinced a vast number of stakeholders, including some very senior civil servants and politicians, that at a time when public money is very tight the project is worth spending a huge amount of money on. The Crown Office, the criminal justice system and the Scottish Prison Service are also lining up behind it. Both men have done a huge amount of work in order to achieve that and they would not have done so had they not been at the top of their game with regard to managing programmes; indeed, they have been complimented on how the programme has been run.

Neil Richardson will not be departing; indeed, given the sort of person he is, he would not want to. He will want to deliver the project, and the same will be true of Alec Hippman. They will stay with the project—as, I hope, will I—and we will

have oversight of it. Oversight will also be supplied by the SPA, the committee and, I have no doubt, the Scottish Parliament in due course.

Alison McInnes: Thank you.

Should I just roll into the next set of questions, convener?

The Convener: I am happy to do so if we have concluded that discussion.

Recent Developments

13:37

The Convener: The next item on the agenda is an evidence session on recent developments, with a focus on the recent announcements on changes to governance arrangements and SPA senior staff.

Alison McInnes has her foot in the door for the first question.

Alison McInnes: Mr Emery, you must be feeling kind of battered and bruised with the recent developments.

Vic Emery: Not at all.

Alison McInnes: I want to get the timeline clear in my mind. When did you know that Andrea Quinn was not going to apply for the permanent chief executive post?

Vic Emery: Let me backtrack a moment. When the SPA was formed back in November, we had no leadership at an executive level. At the time, Andrea Quinn was the chief executive of the Scottish Police Services Authority and I prevailed upon her goodness to come across and work with the SPA on an interim basis. Her substantive role as chief executive of the SPSA ended on 31 March.

Last December, because of the large number of executives who needed to exit the business, the board agreed a voluntary redundancy scheme, part of which was an executive severance package and, in February, Andrea Quinn advised me that she did not want to put her name forward for the substantive role of SPA chief executive, lead executive or whatever we call the post in the future.

That is just a little bit of history, if you like, but the answer to your question is February.

Alison McInnes: When did you know that Ms Quinn was not going to complete her role as interim chief executive and that she was going to resign rather precipitately?

Vic Emery: She has not resigned. She is still there and will be there until September.

Alison McInnes: But you have intimated that we will need another interim chief executive.

Vic Emery: Yes, because you cannot hold people from getting on with their lives for an infinite amount of time. When Ms Quinn told me in February that she did not want to continue, I agreed with her a date in September for leaving the organisation.

With time moving on and with our new look at the way that we want to work, there is a possibility

that we will not have a lead executive for a period after she leaves. We are desperate to get on and advertise a permanent position, and the work that we need to do over the next two months, which will be brought to the August board meeting, will define that role a little better than it has been defined previously. There will be a handover and another interim person will be needed for probably three to six months until we get the permanent person in place.

Alison McInnes: Was any part of her reasoning related to the redesignation and the changes in governance?

Vic Emery: None at all.

Alison McInnes: When was the need for the changes to governance identified? You have come before us on many occasions and told us that things were being resolved. The cabinet secretary told Parliament in March that everything was hunky-dory and that we were all getting worried about tittle-tattle. When exactly did the changes start to take effect?

Vic Emery: We have been discussing the issue with our partners for the past few weeks. When we set up the SPA, our initial priority was to ensure that there was a smooth transition and that the merger of 10 organisations took place smoothly. If you had asked anyone in the street, they would not have noticed the change. The police are to be congratulated on doing that.

Our focus was to undertake the merger and to ensure that it went smoothly. It has gone smoothly and it is all working well. There are obviously lots of things to do, but we now need to turn our attention to reform, not merger. We need to not get involved in the day-to-day policing operation and the support services that the chief constable needs. Therefore, we have made a conscious decision—in consultation with HMICS, the Scottish Government and the Police Service of Scotland—from now on to concentrate on governance, policy, strategy and scrutiny instead of providing some of the services that we provided in the beginning.

Alison McInnes: I do not want to hog the discussion, but I have one final question. I would be interested in hearing the chief constable's views. We have been told that SPA members considered and agreed the next-phase governance approach as the foundation for the strategic policy direction and the new governance. When did they agree that?

Vic Emery: They agreed that formally yesterday at the board meeting.

Alison McInnes: Yes, but we were told about it in advance of that. Indeed, we were told about it in your SPA statement, which we received last week. When was that agreed before the board meeting?

Vic Emery: A team was put together that was comprised of executive members of the SPA and the board of the SPA. As I have said previously, they have worked through the new arrangements over the past two or three—maybe four—weeks. That work was presented to the board at large yesterday and it was agreed.

Margaret Mitchell: We have had three interim senior officials working for a period of time. Why did the SPA not move to appoint a permanent chief executive officer when you knew as far back as February that Andrea Quinn would be leaving? Questions will be asked about morale in the SPA if three senior officials in important posts feel that they could not stay on even long enough for permanent positions to be created.

Vic Emery: Andrea Quinn's decision was a personal one that she made. The decision was not given to her; it was a decision that she made for herself and I see no conflict going forward. The timescales have moved on a bit. However, in February—

Margaret Mitchell: With respect, Mr Emery, you knew about her decision in February and we are now in June.

Vic Emery: Yes.

Margaret Mitchell: Why did you not start to make moves to appoint someone to a permanent position in February? We are in the worst of all possible scenarios with these interim appointments, and there is to be yet another interim appointment.

Vic Emery: We made moves in March and started to draw up a role profile, which we then submitted to the Scottish Government, with the indication that we needed from the Government an analysis of the pay and conditions for that position. As we moved forward, we obviously concentrated on ensuring that we had a smooth transition, so that role was not the centre of our focus—the smooth transition to a single police force was the single focus. However, we then started to think that, as things had gone okay, we needed to consider our role going forward and to take more of a reform role. Therefore, that role profile will change a bit.

13:45

Margaret Mitchell: I really doubt whether anyone would consider it a smooth transition to have two interim chief executives and then a permanent one. I do not think that I have heard a convincing explanation of why moves were not made to appoint a permanent chief executive and why it was not possible to persuade the two directors who have resigned to stay on long

enough to allow a permanent appointment to be made.

Vic Emery: There is no one in the SPA who is other than an interim employee. Of the two people to whom you refer, one was on a short-term six-month contract that expires now and the other was on a consultancy contract, which we renewed for six months at the beginning of the year, and that person has chosen not to continue. So those two people were contractors and we fully expected them to leave the business. That will not have a negative impact, because we have other people we will put in to fill the roles.

Margaret Mitchell: Knowing that they were going to leave the business, do you believe that that was the very best governance that could have been achieved in that time?

Vic Emery: Yes, I do.

Margaret Mitchell: I beg to differ.

The Convener: I just do not understand why people would resign when they have a fixed-term contract that is expiring.

Vic Emery: They have not resigned; they are completing their contract and leaving at the end.

The Convener: So they are not resigning.

Vic Emery: No, they have not resigned.

Graeme Pearson: First, it would be small-minded not to acknowledge that, in your correspondence to the committee, you intimate that you are taking a new policy direction. I am grateful for that and, given all the comments that I have made over the past 18 months about the situation, I think that common sense has prevailed. You were also good enough to acknowledge the various partners who played a part in deciding that the new direction should be achieved. Do you think that your experience at the sub-committee and the Justice Committee has helped to educate that position and, along with the other comments that you have received, to suggest a way forward?

Vic Emery: Our approach right from the beginning has been to put in place the best governance that we could. All the organisations that we have put in place and all the agreements that we have reached with the Police Service of Scotland with regard to schemes of delegation, schemes of activities and so on had a recognition in them that we would need to change. There were agreements for transfer of personnel between the two organisations. We now believe that it is time to move on to be a much more scrutinising policy and strategy organisation than a delivery organisation. If you remember—in fact, I doubt that you would ever forget—we had two roles in the beginning: a maintenance role and a governance role. What we are basically saying is

that the maintenance role will pass back to the Police Service of Scotland.

Graeme Pearson: My question was about your time at the sub-committee and the Justice Committee: did that assist you in removing the clouds from the way forward and seeing the direction?

Vic Emery: We take cognisance of all our partners. You are all very influential and knowledgeable people, so you are—

Graeme Pearson: It is just that you missed us out in your earlier presentation of how you learned.

Vic Emery: Well, I learn every day about this and that.

Graeme Pearson: Excellent.

Vic Emery: So we are grateful for any support that you will give us.

Graeme Pearson: Okay. Putting to the side our unhappy past year, in the documentation there is an acknowledgement that, going forward, you need transparency from Police Scotland in giving you access to information and access to people to get that information so that you can properly hold the service to account.

Do you feel confident from the conversations that you have had up to now with the chief constable that you will get the level of access that you require? Do you feel that, now that you are taking your proper governance position, you will be able to do that with some strength and acuity?

Vic Emery: Transparency and openness have been a key issue in all the discussions that we have had on the next phase of governance. You will need to ask the chief constable himself—

Graeme Pearson: I am going to.

Vic Emery: I have not heard the chief constable demur from that one bit.

Graeme Pearson: I am asking whether you are confident that you will be able to exercise that oversight.

Vic Emery: I have great confidence in the chief constable and the Police Service of Scotland.

Graeme Pearson: So do I, but do you have great confidence that you will be able to exercise governance and oversight?

Vic Emery: I see no reason why I should not.

Graeme Pearson: Thank you.

Chief constable, are you prepared to ensure that doors are open throughout your organisation to provide the Scottish Police Authority with the

information that it asks for and requires to ensure that you are called to account?

Chief Constable House: Yes.

Graeme Pearson: That is all I need.

The Convener: What I am hearing now is what the Justice Committee thought was in the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Bill and subsequent act of Parliament when we started: that the SPA has a scrutiny and oversight role, and maintenance and operation are with the police. Like Graeme Pearson, I am delighted that we have got there. The committee was rather cross that we were portrayed as people who had not scrutinised the bill properly. Obviously, we had done so. Where we are now is where we ought to have been from the start.

I thought that I would get that off my chest on behalf of the committee.

Kevin Stewart: I did not have the scrutinising role that the Justice Committee had, but I watched from afar and completely agree with the convener on that front.

I want to go back to the permanent staffing arrangements that you are considering, Mr Emery. Having been involved in the recruitment of folk for very senior roles in the past, I know that the processes sometimes take a long time. Can you give us the timetable for the appointment process? Will there be any external involvement in the recruitment?

Vic Emery: Over the next two months, our next target is to get approval for the way that we wish to proceed and the organisation that we want to do that. Our target is to present that to the board at the August meeting. A working group that involves all our partners to decide how that is best done will therefore continue. In the meantime, an advertisement has gone out internally and externally for an interim chief executive, as we recognise the point that you have made well: that sometimes appointments take some time to get in place. We expect a six-month turnaround, which is why we need someone to fill in after Andrea Quinn leaves.

Kevin Stewart: I do not have a difficulty with having two interim people. I saw that happen in the past, when somebody had to move on elsewhere for good reasons. However, I am trying to get my head round why it would take until August to get agreement on what the role should be. Obviously, your board took a decision yesterday, and I think that everybody would agree that that is a good thing, but if I were in your position, I would move a little swiftly to get the agreements that are required so that you can start to find the right person or people to take on the jobs on a permanent basis.

I asked about external help. Are you dealing with any recruitment advisers to try to find people who are capable of fulfilling the role or roles?

Vic Emery: I have handed that to my human resources department to look after for me. As far as I am aware, we have gone to interim agencies to assist us in putting an interim director in place. As far as the long term is concerned, we have not taken that step yet for the permanent structure, because we need to define the role and the salary that will be attached to it.

Kevin Stewart: Maybe I am being a little bit daft but, yesterday, the board defined its role so, surely, the definition of the chief executive's role is to head up the roles that the board defined yesterday. I cannot see why it would take so long to put that definition in place.

Vic Emery: Because we need to work on what the SPA requires to enable it to do an effective and efficient best-value scrutiny of the police. We need to decide what size and shape of audit function and what sort of financial and HR analysis we need to have, what strategy documents we need to approve and how we approve policy that the Police Service of Scotland develops. We need to flesh all that out and say how many people we need to do that.

I share your anxiety that we need to move on quickly. I am as anxious as you seem to be, but we need to do it in a proper timeframe. I would love it to be done as quickly as possible.

Kevin Stewart: I understand what you say about dealing with all the matters with which you need to deal, but I am concerned with the definition of the role. I have been on recruitment panels that have recruited chief executives, directors and chief constables. In my mind, it is possible to come up with a definition of a job quite quickly. Anyway, the key thing is not the definition of the role but the capability and adaptability of the folk who are in front of you before you make the decision on whether to award the job. I really cannot get my head round why it would take so long to define the role.

Vic Emery: We will do it as quickly as possible, but there is a process to go through. We have a specification of the job. Deciding whether we have the right person to do the job involves writing a personal profile as well as an overall profile. I am teaching you how to suck eggs here and I do not mean to. We will do it as quickly as possible.

The Convener: I take it that the reason is that what the SPA will do has changed.

Vic Emery: The SPA will now be focused more on the governance, scrutiny and policy role.

The Convener: That is why we have had the delay in making permanent appointments.

Vic Emery: Yes.

The Convener: Roderick Campbell has a question.

Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP): No, that was my question, convener.

The Convener: I am so sorry. I thought that it was where Kevin Stewart was going to go.

Alison McInnes: Chief constable, you must be relieved that we finally have clarity and more single-mindedness on the matter. To look forward, the staff whom you already have in place were taken on under a twin-track type of appointment. Do there need to be any changes? How do you run and shape your organisation now that it has overall control of recruitment?

Chief Constable House: I do not feel that changes are needed because, other than the police officers, the people whom I took on, particularly the director of finance and the director of HR—and now the director of ICT—are experienced. The finance and HR directors held those posts in Strathclyde Police and have huge experience.

To be frank, the fact that, as Vic Emery has said on a number of occasions, we have prepared for the biggest public sector change in recent years in Scotland and it has gone as smoothly as it has—the public have not noticed, crime continues to reduce and the organisation is doing what it says it does, which is keeping people safe—is, in the main, down to the directors of finance and HR in Police Scotland. They have done a truly outstanding job in getting the organisation to where it is. The cops have done a good job, but the real grunt work has been in getting the budgets set up and resolving all the people issues that are involved.

I am happy to have this occasion to say that publicly about those two directors. Their skill set is the right one for the job. As Vic Emery has said, with the ICT coming across to us, the chief information officer from the SPA will now become the director of ICT for Police Scotland.

14:00

Alison McInnes: I am happy to acknowledge that the operational transition has been smooth, but I am with Margaret Mitchell in that we cannot call the kind of turmoil that we have seen over the past six months a successful transition.

Chief Constable House: If I may say so, you asked me to look forward. I am looking at the public's attitude. The job for the authority and for us is to deliver a policing service. That has been done.

Alison McInnes: I am reassured that you are saying that there will be no further staffing upheaval. You feel that you can move straight on.

Chief Constable House: Absolutely.

Alison McInnes: That is helpful.

Graeme Pearson: Chief constable, you have been fortunate enough to sit on the sidelines as Vic Emery has gone through a bit of a torrid time with the questioning thus far. There have been reservations on the policing side about the arrangements with the SPA. Are you satisfied that the arrangements that are now in place allow you to exercise your responsibilities effectively and that there are no structural and organisational impediments to moving forward with Police Scotland?

Chief Constable House: Almost on principle, I want to resist saying a simple yes but, from everything that I have seen, we have been involved in a wholly positive development. We were not principal players because it is a decision for the SPA, not Police Scotland, to take. However, we have been consulted.

From where I sit and having been in the authority meeting yesterday for a few hours going through everything, the development looks wholly positive to me. We are in a good place.

Graeme Pearson: That is useful.

The Convener: There are no further questions. I thank Vic Emery and Chief Constable House very much for giving evidence. I feel that the Justice Committee has been vindicated, if I can be forgiven for saying that once again. I look forward to happy developments.

We have pencilled in complaints investigation as our next topic for examination to begin at our next meeting on 5 September. Are members content to move on to that or would they prefer to revisit any of the issues that we have discussed today? Do we agree to move on?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: In that case, we will take evidence from the Scottish Police Federation, the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents and the relevant deputy chief constable.

I thank everyone very much for squeezing in this meeting. I close the meeting and hope that everybody has a good break during the summer recess.

Meeting closed at 14:02.

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