



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 11 November 2014

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JUSTICE COMMITTEE

28th Meeting 2014, Session 4

CONVENER

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

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
*Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP)
*John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
*Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD)
Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con)
*John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
*Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Vic Emery (Scottish Police Authority)
John Foley (Scottish Police Authority)
Calum Steele (Scottish Police Federation)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Joanne Clinton

LOCATION

The Mary Fairfax Somerville Room (CR2)

Scottish Parliament

Justice Committee

Tuesday 11 November 2014

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:30]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Christine Grahame): Good morning and welcome to the Justice Committee's 28th meeting of 2014. I ask everyone to switch off mobile phones and other electronic devices because they interfere with broadcasting, even when switched to silent. Apologies have been received from Margaret Mitchell.

Under agenda item 1, the committee is invited to agree to take in private item 4, which is consideration of a report on the Scottish statutory instrument on the drink-driving limit that we considered in previous weeks. Do members agree to that?

Members indicated agreement.

Draft Budget Scrutiny 2015-16

09:31

The Convener: Item 2 is an evidence session on the Scottish Government's draft budget for 2015-16. This is the second day of scrutiny of the police budget and we will hear from two panels of witnesses.

I welcome to the meeting Calum Steele, general secretary of the Scottish Police Federation. Calum, you are a panel—there you are. Members will recall that we arranged this extra session because the SPF was unable to attend last week. We have your written submission, for which I thank you, so I will go straight to questions from members.

John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab): You are probably aware that concern has been raised about whether we have a balanced workforce. My first question is probably a yes or no question. Did you consider that the police workforce was balanced before unification?

Calum Steele (Scottish Police Federation): "Balanced" and "workforce" are two words that make sense individually in the English language but, when it comes to the police service, I am not sure that they attract much consideration, other than through being readily bandied around. I do not know what is meant by a balanced workforce. I assume that to some extent it means the correct mix of support staff and police officers.

Short of getting into ratios, which chief constables have historically been reluctant to do, there will always be a job somewhere that could be done by someone else—be they a member of police staff or a police officer—or be better suited to someone else. Ultimately, given the chief constable's statutory responsibility to deliver an effective and efficient police service, only he can say whether he considers the workforce to be balanced.

There is clearly a considerable concern about the loss of support staff that has taken place over the past couple of years. I do not intend to rehash many of the comments that I made to the committee last year, but I consider that the mix probably is about right. There will be a considerable period of flux when there are square pegs in round holes and round pegs in square holes. That is not ideal, but it is an inevitable consequence of taking what was eight plus one—in effect, nine—services and jamming them together to make one.

John Pentland: If you consider that the mix is right, why did you suggest in your submission that

local authorities should take up the role of spending money on support staff for police?

Calum Steele: I am glad that you asked the question in that way, because I noticed that, when a similar question was put to Stevie Diamond of Unison, the implication was that I or the Scottish Police Federation suggested that local authorities go back to employing support staff. That is absolutely not the case.

I do not wish to second-guess Elaine Murray's questions, but I suspect that some of the issues about control rooms in Dumfries might be a feature today. It seems to me that there are more creative solutions out there than those that are being deployed.

When local authorities directly fund police officers—to some extent, they still do that—they do not act as the police officer's employer; in much the same way, I do not think that they would act as the member of support staff's employer. However, there are opportunities for local authorities and communities to come up with more imaginative solutions to keep employment in their areas and support the police service.

One thing that I think everyone agrees on is that the police service is about more than just police officers. Why not look at the delivery of the police service beyond just the man or woman in the woolly suit?

John Pentland: Are you aware of any instances where police officers are doing backroom work? I cannot remember off hand the name of the lady who gave evidence last week, but she said that officers are covering that work.

Calum Steele: In the police service, we always struggle with getting a clear definition of what is backroom and what is front line. I am certainly aware of instances where police officers sometimes do jobs that support staff did in the past. As I said, that is an example of where there are sometimes square pegs in round holes or round pegs in square holes, but that is an inevitable consequence of transition.

I suspect that some of the examples cited apply to control rooms or contact centres—whatever name happens to be applied—and custody areas. I seem to recall that the chief constable gave an assurance last year that there is no long-term policy of backfilling support staff roles with police officers, and I have no reason to believe that that is anything other than his intention.

John Pentland: You may think that putting square pegs into round holes is an inevitable part of transition, but do you think that it is right?

Calum Steele: Yes, I am afraid that I do. The reason for that is that police officers are a more flexible resource; there are times when their skills

allow them to do a job for a short period. These are not continual and on-going backfilling commitments. If police officers carried out the roles in those circumstances, of course I would consider that to be unacceptable.

In some instances—I am not saying in all instances—the cost of delivering the service is not properly appreciated. Many support staff roles are performed by retired police officers. The salary of a member of support staff might be lower than the salary of a police officer, but there might also be an ill-health pension or a substantive pension on the back of that salary, which significantly alters the cost of the service to the overall justice budget. Removing large numbers of roles that were traditionally available for officers who were recuperating also works against the efficient use of police officers.

John Pentland: I have one final question. You said that perhaps the workforce balance is now right. Are you saying that no more backroom staff should be allowed to go? If the balance is correct, where do you expect further savings to be found?

Calum Steele: It is my desire that no member of staff should lose their employment. It is particularly difficult when such circumstances present themselves. All the decisions are a consequence of financial decisions that are taken in this building. The simple fact is that reductions to budgets over the years mean that there will be cuts. It is easy enough to say where cuts should not be made, but it is a lot harder to say where they should be made.

It is easy for me to say that I do not think that anyone should lose their job and it is easy for you to ask me whether it is right or fair that members of support staff have lost theirs and that police officers undertake elements of backfilling on occasion. That will not help us to answer the question of how we meet the long-term financial challenges that the service faces. The service and local and Holyrood politicians need to be more honest about the difficulty that we face, not just this year but for the next 15 or 20 years.

John Pentland: This really is my final question. To take on board your previous comment, what are the resource challenges facing Scotland?

Calum Steele: Despite my youthful appearance, I have been in the police service for more than 21 years, actively involved in the Scottish Police Federation for the guts of a decade and in my current role for more than six years. I have seen overall staffing costs, as a proportion of the budget, increase quite considerably over that time. There are two reasons for that. First, there has been a healthy increase in police numbers. Secondly, there has been a decline in the budget overall. It does not take someone with the brain of

Einstein to work out that if staff costs keep going up and the budget keeps going down we will reach a point of critical mass.

Someone needs to stand up and tell us what will happen. It is easy to ask the chief constable what he is going to do but, until our politicians tell the public that they want either fewer police officers and more members of support staff or more police officers who are less well paid, we will go round in circles. Year on year, the individual decisions will come down to salami slicing elements to find solutions but, in reality, none of them will work.

John Pentland: Can I just ask—

The Convener: John, there is a long list of people, but I will let you ask one last question.

John Pentland: Are you saying that operational matters of Police Scotland should be in the hands of politicians?

Calum Steele: Absolutely not. However, there are operational matters and there are wider issues, such as how many police officers are considered appropriate for Scotland's streets. I do not think that anyone can say that the current Government's policy of 1,000 extra police officers is an operational decision—it is a political decision that has been welcomed by our communities, by my colleagues and by many different people.

There will come a point when politicians have to say whether they think that the number of police officers is right or wrong and whether they think that police officers get paid too much or not enough. Once those honest discussions are had, the police service will be better placed to know what the Parliament expects of it.

The Convener: I am going to move on.

John Pentland: I will just finish by thanking Mr Steele.

The Convener: Before I let John Finnie ask his supplementary question, I ask Calum Steele to develop his suggestion that local authorities

“dedicate funding to specialist support staff roles in their communities”.

Will you give an example of what you mean? What would they be doing?

Calum Steele: I suppose that the detail would be thrashed out between local authorities and the chief constable, but there might also be a role for the Scottish Police Authority. The horse might have already bolted in relation to this example, but the C3 project, which is on control rooms, would have provided a great opportunity. It is probably a missed opportunity now. I have no doubt that Ms Murray would consider that a highly skilled workforce is available in Dumfries that would have lent itself neatly to developing the skill needed not

just for the police service but for wider elements of local government delivery. That approach could have worked well in Dumfries.

Another example might arise where there is an abundance of highly trained accountants—I am loth to use the term “forensic accountants”, because I do not really know what it means, unless it is an accountant wearing a white coat and looking at a computer screen—who could offer support. There might be opportunities for the very skilled financial services industries in local authority areas in and around Edinburgh to offer support to the police service by saying, “If you are looking for a future serious examination of financial crime, why not consider using some skills that we can help with?” Those are just two simple examples.

The Convener: I wanted to develop that point because it seems to be a fresh line.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind): I have a comment about the issues that Mr Pentland raised about police officers undertaking support staff duties. I appreciate that my knowledge of the issue is time limited. In my day, I remember that there were two categories of officer who might have found themselves doing that: people on protected duties, such as new and expectant mothers, and people on restricted duties, such as police officers returning to work after having been assaulted on duty, who for a period do not have the wherewithal to perform full operational duties. Nothing changed on 1 April. I presume that those categories of officer are still gainfully employed by Police Scotland, as they would have been in the nine constituent services.

09:45

Calum Steele: Yes. Although the terminology might have changed over time, the categories that you name are broadly correct. The one that might be added now is officers whose duties are not protected or restricted but who are undertaking jobs where reasonable adjustments have been made because of disability. By and large, however, the two categories of officer who undertake support staff roles still exist to some extent.

There are some internal policy matters concerning the appropriateness of, or the approach being adopted for, some of those deployments, which it would be inappropriate to thrash around in the committee, as they are more suited for the internal mechanisms of the police service. By and large, the categories that you described are correct.

John Finnie: I presume that the alternative to an officer being deployed in that way would be a

requirement that they retire on the grounds of ill health—a policy that itself would have costs.

Calum Steele: In many cases, that is what happens.

John Finnie: Obviously, I am not talking about new or expectant mothers.

Calum Steele: I hope not.

What you say is the case—if officers cannot be deployed, an ill-health retirement is looked at. Of course, there is no guarantee that it follows. As I said, we are getting into internal policy matters of the service, but we could have officers off sick for long periods because of a refusal or an unwillingness to deploy them, where pay continues to be a cost. That is not an efficient use of police time. However, we risk drifting into policy matters.

The Convener: I want to move on, because our time is short.

Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP): Good morning, Mr Steele. I find your honesty refreshing, especially in your submission. I will go back to what you said about creative solutions to address the challenges in the budget. We heard a lot in evidence last week about redefining the role of police officers. Creative solutions could involve local authorities and even the private sector. They could even involve redefining certain of the roles that police officers have. I am thinking particularly about duties that officers have over the weekend, such as those at football matches.

Calum Steele: There are opportunities for the police service and, in fact, not only opportunities but expectations of the service. All services look at every single avenue for improving how they are structured and how they deliver services to the public now and into the future. The private sector has a role in some elements of service delivery, as does the third sector. As many of us have observed, the third sector has suffered somewhat because, when budgets get tight, the contributions that are made by many of the larger services—particularly those of the police to charitable organisations—diminish. That is a self-fulfilling prophecy of defeat.

On redefining the role of police officers, I think that the role is simple—it is to provide reassurance and assistance to the public. The role has been defined as to “guard, patrol and watch”, as has been laid out in legislation almost since time immemorial. Police officers’ activities have not changed much over the decades, but there are different approaches to how the service is delivered. Whereas in the past someone might have had to write a letter that would have taken several days to be delivered to the local constable, they now pick up a mobile phone or send a tweet,

with the expectation that they will receive a response instantaneously. The service has evolved only in terms of the expectations that are placed on it and not in terms of the actual job.

Christian Allard: I was talking particularly about contracts that the police have with private parties for events such as football matches. We know that, for a lot of services, the police charge other entities, and sometimes those bills do not cover all the work that the police officers do, particularly during the weekend.

The elephant in the room with the budget is pensions. Perhaps you could talk about that. We do not know what will happen in the 2015-16 budget. Is now the time to address the response?

Calum Steele: Yes—certainly. How we provide services to large public events such as football matches or pop concerts needs to be looked at. In some ways, that goes back to the point that I made in my submission about what we expect the police service to do and what we expect other services to do. I made a particular comment about health services that we might be able to explore later.

If the expectation is that the police will police regardless, but in some circumstances—such as large gatherings of members of our communities—the service will be chargeable, that needs to be properly understood by everyone. It is easy to identify Celtic and Rangers matches, and possibly T in the Park or large golfing events, but the concept in its own right could notionally extend down to the local village Highland games or other local sporting events. There are things that need to be understood about the expectation to pay for policing.

I know that Niven Rennie of the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents discussed last week how football events are policed, so I do not need to go into that but, until there is a genuinely open conversation about whether police services are free regardless of the activity or whether the police can charge for covering certain activities, we will probably be thrashing this around for a long time to come.

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab): Last week, Chief Superintendent Rennie and Stevie Diamond described to us the stress that their members are working under. People are not getting overtime, or if they are, they are having to work longer hours, come to work when they are unwell and that sort of thing. Are your members having the same experience?

Calum Steele: It would be misleading to paint a picture that everything in the garden was rosy. There is a phenomenal amount of pressure on police officers. We have only to look at the exceptional year that we have had with large,

mass participation public events, all of which have demanded considerable police resources and flexibility from police officers.

However, let me be clear: the greatest unhappiness among police just now is not because of Police Scotland, but because of the economy and changes to pensions. There is massive anger and upset and a huge sense of betrayal that terms and conditions that police officers felt they had signed up to have been taken away from under them. Police officers—like, as I would acknowledge, everyone else in the public sector—have had to pay considerably more for their pensions over the years at a time when their wages are being outstripped by inflation and have either stayed stagnant or increased only modestly. When we add to that the additional stress or change that has been brought about by the creation of the Police Service of Scotland and indeed the considerable disruption that has taken place during the past year, it is not surprising that there is a lot of stress and that there have been expressions of considerably low morale among the federated officers.

Elaine Murray: Chief Superintendent Rennie implied that some of the savings that were made by the creation of Police Scotland had not been used for front-line policing but had gone into funding directorates in the Scottish Police Authority. Is that your perception?

Calum Steele: The Scottish Police Authority has certainly grown to be larger than I envisaged it would. I consider the SPA to be conceptually the right thing to do, but with hindsight the concept probably lacked detail. Although the old police boards and authorities could have relied on the local authority's legal services departments and so on to provide support, that does not exist to the same extent for the Scottish Police Authority. Like the Police Service of Scotland, the SPA is an evolving beast, and it probably needs to cut its cloth more appropriately to the financial circumstances. We cannot have the body that is responsible for governing growing exponentially at a time when the service is expected not to.

The Convener: I am trying to remember, but was it not the case that, when there were eight constabularies, they were exempt from VAT? That must have cost a pretty penny.

Calum Steele: Yes, indeed, convener.

The Convener: And now VAT is levied and is not recoverable.

Calum Steele: I think that that is an immense frustration for all of us.

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): Good morning, Mr Steele. I want to ask about the issue that you hoped we could go into in more depth: the

transfer of funds from the Police Service to the health service. Obviously, I have visited prisons as part of the Justice Committee's work, and it seemed to me that if we could get the national health service involved instead of its remaining separate streamlining might happen. Can you expand on why you are concerned about that specific aspect of the budget?

Calum Steele: I am concerned about the notion rather than the specific aspect. Let me work backwards: the Police Service and police officers have enormous day-to-day involvement with individuals who suffer from mental health problems. Indeed, a large proportion of police time is taken up with dealing with individuals who have such problems. Arguably—in fact, undoubtedly—that is not the best approach. I can think of fewer things that are more corrosive to individuals who suffer from ill health than for them to find themselves stuck in a solid concrete room with a steel door and a small wicket to look at. However, although the Police Service is engaged in such crisis intervention and management in the first instance, there has been no corresponding transfer of funding from health to the police to deal with that. I take the view that, if the police are expected to police regardless, the health service should be expected to deliver health regardless. Irrespective of whether an individual is or is not in police custody, the health service should have a responsibility for looking after them.

Of course, there are areas where the police should pay for additional health elements, and those areas clearly include exposure to forensic examinations and the requirement to gather blood. However, what happens in a large proportion of cases is that individuals who suffer from mental illness, which is a health consideration, are locked up in cells. Why are the police paying for the failure—perhaps that is an emotive word—of a health system that allows individuals to be in those cells in the first place by giving money back to it? It seems to me that health possibly gets a double dividend out of this.

Other elements of the cost of providing medical forensic services are unnecessarily complex; let us, for example, consider our road traffic legislation. A blood sample from an accused person must be taken by a doctor. As far as I am aware—and I have two sisters who work as nurses—most blood is now drawn by nurses. The cost of securing doctors to draw blood is considerably higher than the cost of nurses—if nurses were allowed to draw blood under the legislation, of course.

Again, we are not helped by the fact that across Scotland, as I understand it, we do not have a single point of negotiation with the health service for the provision of doctor services, not least

because the health service exists as an umbrella body, even though there are individual health boards and authorities underneath it. We need to undertake that process many times over, which in itself is highly inefficient and wasteful.

Sandra White: My understanding was that the professionals in the health service were the best people to look at people in custody and that that would result in a much more seamless and better approach for the prisoner or anyone held in remand. I absolutely understand the point that people with mental health problems should not be in prison, but unfortunately that might not come to the fore until they have been arrested.

You mentioned police officers being deployed to other services because they might have particular experience, but surely it would be better for people in the medical profession who had medical experience to treat those people rather than the Police Service. Is this a purely budgetary issue?

10:00

Calum Steele: It is a budgetary issue. Clearly, health professionals are the best people to deal with health—

The Convener: I think that your point was that the police should not be paying for that and that the health service should be putting money into the police, which—if I have followed you—is the opposite of what is happening.

Calum Steele: Or we could avoid the merry-go-round of taking money from one area and giving it to another, and we just say, “The responsibility’s yours. Get on with it.”

The Convener: I am sorry for interrupting, Sandra—

Sandra White: No, no, convener—that is all right. I know that Mr Steele was making that point; I just wanted to expand on it. As I understand it, the reason why money was taken from that budget and moved to the health service was to create a seamless approach and because the professionals are in the health service. I do not think that Mr Steele was denying that; I think that he was saying that it is purely a budgetary issue.

Mr Steele, I was interested in your point that in certain cases only doctors can take blood, when, in fact, that is something that a nurse would normally do. It probably brings us to the nitty-gritty of the issue, and we should perhaps look at that in the context of the budget.

Calum Steele: Yes, indeed. I regret that I am not more up on parliamentary procedure. Another horse that might have bolted is the possibility of amending that provision, an opportunity for which might have been provided by the change to the

drink-driving legislation. However, I am not sure whether that would be a matter for the Parliament.

Such things need to be looked at in the round. The traditional approach of “We’ve aye done it this way, therefore we’ve got to continue doing it this way” is not going to sustain services in Scotland—or anywhere in the United Kingdom, given the cuts that are happening.

Sandra White: Do you support the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents, who told us at last week’s meeting that, in the context of the budget, we need to look at the whole issue of what people expect of the police force?

Calum Steele: Yes. That is an inevitable development when there is a lack of finance, and I suspect that I know what the answer is. People will want the police to do what the police have always done, nurses to do what nurses have always done, teachers to do what teachers have always done, social workers to do what social workers have always done and councils to do what councils have always done, and no one is prepared to have the conversation about how all of that is meant to be done with less money.

Since 2007, there has been a 6 per cent real-terms cut to Scotland’s grant. Across all areas of the public sector, services have increased exponentially since the Parliament came into being. If the tap had been turned off and the funding kept static, that would have been challenge enough, but against the background of a reducing budget, things are really difficult, and I see no desire from anyone to start having conversations about how that will be addressed.

The Convener: Rod Campbell wants to come in. John, do you have a question?

John Finnie: A brief one, if I may—

The Convener: Not yet. [*Laughter.*]

Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP): Sorry, convener. Does John Finnie’s question relate to what Mr Steele just said?

John Finnie: No, it does not.

The Convener: No, no. John is on my list. I know what I am doing—I think. Please do not try to organise me.

Roderick Campbell: I would not dream of doing that, convener.

I want to pursue Elaine Murray’s line of questioning about the evidence that we heard last week from Chief Superintendent Rennie. The Scottish Police Authority has said that the overtime budget for police officers has been exceeded by almost half a million pounds. The chief superintendent talked about demands on police time, and I remember that last year Mr

Steele told us that overtime was being reduced because of the large number of police officers, given the target of 17,234 officers. What is your current view on overtime demands on officers?

Calum Steele: Over the past 12 months, the demand for flexibility from officers, including anything from short-notice shift changes to enormous changes in an officer's overall shift patterns, has been considerable, and the nature of police work—and overtime in particular—has been very unpredictable. No one could have known that events such as the Commonwealth games would have required such a large overtime requirement, but changes in threat assessment and security considerations have inevitably had an impact.

Either we have police officers whose daily lives are chopped about from pillar to post and who live with uncertainty about how they work, or we pay officers overtime. If it is going to be the former option, we have to ensure that they are properly remunerated in the first place to make that expectation a tolerable burden. I think it likely that overtime and the demand for overtime will continue to exist as they always have done. I fear that, as the availability of overtime either in payment or in time back will reduce, the service may get to the point where it relies on the goodwill of individuals to continue to perform and to put in extra hours without any compensation. Even then there are underlying difficulties, not least in terms of what it might mean for an individual's health and conflicts with the requirements of the working time directive.

Roderick Campbell: I have a separate question on the report by HM inspectorate of constabulary in Scotland on local policing in Fife, which found a widespread view among support staff and police officers that the previous "family feel" of Fife constabulary had been lost slightly in the new set-up. Has that been an issue elsewhere in Scotland or is it unique to Fife?

Calum Steele: I do not believe that it is unique to Fife, but I have no empirical evidence to support that view. I have anecdotes galore, but they are of limited value.

The Convener: I want to move on, because I am mindful of the fact that we have to suspend at 10.58 and that Mr Emery has to leave after the two minutes' silence. This session is taking longer than expected, so forgive me if I rush you along.

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): I will be brief, convener.

Last week, Mr Penman told us that, in budgetary terms, the forthcoming year will be much more challenging than those we have faced before. We know that the business case on which savings were based was pretty sketchy, but would you support calls for a review of the timetable for the

delivery of the savings that were supposed to come through reform?

Calum Steele: The short answer is yes. The long-term issue of finance will not go away, but savings might be made easier if they are made slower.

The stark expectation is that the service will deliver £1.1 billion by 2025-26, which is a year's worth of policing for free. I am content that had the services not amalgamated the challenges facing the former constabularies would have been greater than that being faced by the Police Service of Scotland at this moment, but I think that a slower approach to realising the savings in the round would be of greater benefit to the service.

The danger is that when cash is king—and, currently, cash is king in everything—much of what could be given greater consideration as the right way of delivering the service could get lost. We will just have to see whether such an opportunity presents itself.

John Finnie: Mr Steele, a number of us have met operational front-line officers, and it has been suggested that they increasingly feel that they are serving not the public but the plethora of new departments that have been set up. That is bound to have an impact on the workload of individual officers and overtime budgets. We heard, for example, about officers dealing with a domestic violence incident—something that we all know is very important—who must deliver their reports to a department of five people who always find something further that they must investigate. To what extent has the overtime budget been impacted by the growth of such departments and the additional work that is fed back to front-line officers?

Calum Steele: I am afraid that only Police Scotland would be able to answer that specific question. I am keen to highlight that the Scottish Police Federation has members working in those departments, and all of our police officers, whether they are in such departments or in what we would consider to be the traditional role of answering the call and turning up at the door, are working flat out to deliver an incredible service to the public. It was ever thus that when a new expectation comes along, a department is formed and the resource comes from what is loosely termed "the front line"—which, in simple terms, means those who are available to answer the response calls.

The word that I am getting from across Scotland is that fewer people are available for the response side of policing, but that is not to say that those who are engaged in the various departments are not doing something considerably worth while. That is why I repeat the need for an honest conversation about what is expected of the police

service. If we look only at the time that it takes for a police officer to attend a call, deal with an incident and get an offender to court, we are missing out large elements of what the police service does.

As for domestic incidents, which you mentioned, they take a long time to see through from beginning to end, largely because of the welcome consideration that the service has given to the subject over the years. In the past, it was probably fair to point fingers of accusation because the subject was not being dealt with as properly as it could have been. We might have gone too far now, but rather that than not far enough.

The Convener: Thank you for your evidence, which as usual has been very thoughtful and slightly provocative.

I suspend the meeting for a minute to allow for the changeover of witnesses.

10:11

Meeting suspended.

10:11

On resuming—

The Convener: Before we move on to the next panel of witnesses, I inform members, witnesses and those in the public gallery that they are invited to observe the two-minute silence at 11 am and that they will be asked to stand for it as a mark of respect. There will be a sound to tell us when it starts and when it is concluded, and then we will resume business.

I thank Mr Emery for coming to the meeting at pretty short notice. I know that the witnesses have to leave immediately after the two-minute silence, so that puts committee members on notice to ask short, sharp and tricky questions.

I welcome to the meeting from the Scottish Police Authority Vic Emery, the chair, and John Foley, the chief executive. I know that you heard the tail-end of the evidence from Calum Steele. We have your written submission, so we will go straight to questions from members. John Finnie is in right away, and then it will be Elaine Murray.

John Finnie: Good morning, panel. I want to ask about the important information technology structures that the police service has to deal with. Can you give us reassurance about the state that they are in? I know that there are significant plans that will enhance delivery, if indeed they are delivered. Will there be any surprises in the future for us from that, financial or otherwise?

Vic Emery (Scottish Police Authority): I will ask John Foley to deal with the detail, but I can tell you that a number of initiatives are in train to enable us to be more innovative in the way that we police Scotland and to reduce the costs of doing so. Information and communication technology is a key enabler for that to happen. The committee will know from your written evidence that a lot of programmes are on-going. You know about the i6, C3, custody, single ledger and payroll programmes, which all rely on ICT.

We have set up a governance framework. Police Scotland comes to our office on a regular basis and we scrutinise how it is spending its money and what progress there is against each of the programmes that I referred to. I cannot say that anything untoward has gone on to date. ICT is a strange beast and things can go wrong with it without anyone knowing it, but we have put in place a good governance structure that I hope will prevent that from happening. We want a no-surprises situation on ICT.

John Foley (Scottish Police Authority): We have applied robust governance structures against all the major ICT projects and there is no significant slippage on any of them. The highest profile one is i6, which has a programme board that I sit on. I also chair the ICT scrutiny forum, to which Vic Emery referred. All the key milestones for i6 have been met in accordance with the programme. A gateway review of i6 was carried out fairly recently, and the project was given an amber/green rating. It has been well reported that the governance arrangements are acceptable and robust.

10:15

Elaine Murray: Previous witnesses have said that the cost of running the SPA is higher than anticipated. Is that correct and, if so, how much more does the SPA cost to run than was anticipated when it was set up?

Vic Emery: The SPA was benchmarked. The legacy governance arrangements were highly criticised by HMIC and Audit Scotland with regard to the areas that they did not look at. Most specifically, the issue was with the governance of the financial arrangements in the legacy police forces. We have addressed those shortfalls and we have staffed the SPA to do so.

I want to dispel immediately the notion that the SPA is growing while the police service is shrinking, because that could not be further from the truth. The benchmarks for us are the governance arrangements for the Metropolitan Police, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and other forces, for which the cost of governance is approximately 0.5 per cent of the overall budget.

We are well within 0.5 per cent of the overall budget, so we are governing the police well within the established norms.

John Foley: In addition, the SPA has statutory responsibilities that it must discharge, not least that of producing statutory accounts that cover the SPA budget, which includes Police Scotland. We have to have staff in place to do that. We have dealt with those matters effectively, and we have recently produced a set of accounts that will be laid before Parliament. As Vic Emery said, the cost is less than 0.5 per cent of the overall budget. We are not yet fully up to staff—a few positions still need to be filled—but we are not growing. We have a finite number of positions, which has been agreed and debated in public. There is a ceiling, and we will not go above it.

Elaine Murray: As we have discussed, the budgets are increasingly constricted, so what is the SPA doing to reduce its costs?

John Foley: The SPA has looked to be as efficient as possible. We operate zero-based budgeting each year, so we build up the budget from scratch. We have recently moved premises to free up estate. We have made considerable savings on lease costs on a property that we occupied in central Glasgow. We moved to Pacific Quay and took a floor on a building that was vacant and that the police already paid for, so a saving has been made there. Members will recall that, at previous meetings, we gave evidence about Bremner house in Stirling. We have given up the lease for that, which has resulted in additional cost savings.

Elaine Murray: Your submission suggests that most of the savings from removing duplication have now been made, which will put additional pressures on Police Scotland. Do you have any comment on or concerns about the budget next year?

John Foley: I would advise that there is no duplication between SPA and Police Scotland. Indeed, officers work in a complementary way.

Elaine Murray: I meant the duplication that existed in the previous forces. The savings from removing that have now been made, so that is no longer a source of saving.

John Foley: There may be some savings from that but, by and large, they have materialised over the past year and a half. Other savings could materialise as a result of consolidation in relation to duplication. I am thinking about aspects such as payroll. We still have a large number of distinct payrolls, so we might be able to pull some of them together into one. There are some savings to be made, but they will not be of the same significance as those that we have achieved in the first two years.

Vic Emery: We have always viewed the reform of policing in three stages. The first stage was bringing all the forces into one force; the second stage has been consolidating that position and therefore getting rid of some of the redundancy; and the third stage, which we are just embarking on, is the transformational stage where we do things differently from the way we did them before.

Elaine Murray: Are there any options that you have considered in the past and rejected but which might come back to the table?

Vic Emery: We have considered all options. The list of things that we can do to save money has not been exhausted by a long way, and nothing is off the table. We will look at whatever we can do to maintain the service at best value to the public.

Sandra White: Good morning, gentlemen. We are discussing savings in the budget, and an area that I have been concerned about for a while and which is mentioned in your submission is the recovery of £24 million in VAT. That money, which is being taken out of the funding for police reform, could go some way towards making savings and having better services. What is the current VAT situation? Have we been able to recover any of that £24 million a year, or have we come to any agreement on the matter?

Vic Emery: The VAT situation was declared right at the beginning when the SPA and Police Scotland were set up as non-departmental government bodies. That is not what happens in England and Wales, where VAT is not paid. The Scottish Government has agreed to look at the rationale behind that and to give us some parity with what happens south of the border, but the fact remains that, unfortunately, we have to pay VAT.

You are quite right: the amount varies a little, but it is usually about £22 million to £24 million, depending on what we buy. Most police expenditure is on salaries and people costs, and the VAT attaches to services and materials that are bought in. For the first three years, that will be paid from the reform budget, but it will become a burden—or, I should say, another challenge—from 2015 onwards.

John Foley: As for whether we have been able to recover any of this money, I have to tell you that, unfortunately, we have not. Scottish Government colleagues are speaking to colleagues in London to find out whether the situation can be addressed, but our forward planning has to assume that we will not recover any VAT. If we are successful in recovering that money, that will be to the good of police budgets overall.

The Convener: On a practical level and just for public knowledge, can you tell us what £22 million

to £24 million buys in terms of police resources? What will you not be able to get if you do not get this support after 2015?

Vic Emery: The VAT is a cost to policing—

The Convener: I know what it is. All I am saying is that, at the end of 2015, you might well not get the support that you are getting just now from the fund and you will have to cut that money from what you spend. What resources would that money buy for Police Scotland? I am not an accountant—I do not know what £24 million buys.

Vic Emery: Well, the costs of the SPA, which we have already talked about, come to less than £4 million. [*Interruption.*]

The Convener: I am sorry, Roderick—what did you say?

Roderick Campbell: I was being flippant, convener.

The Convener: I should have been listening to what you said.

Sandra White: This important issue has been missed over the past couple of years, although I have certainly raised it on numerous occasions. My understanding is that 90 per cent of the budget is made up of staff costs. This £24 million is being lost every year, but, as we have heard, there are all these IT systems and that type of thing to deal with.

I am not necessarily making a political point, but we should remember that Wales does not have to pay VAT even though it is a devolved Administration and that Westminster does not have to pay it either. Questions have to be asked, and I hope that the Government will come to some arrangement. Why is the Scottish Government being penalised by not getting the same treatment as Wales and the rest of the UK?

Vic Emery: You make a valid point. We are addressing that with the Scottish Government, but from the SPA's point of view it is a challenge and it is a cost element that we have to take account of when we set budgets for the future. Until it is removed, we have to allow for the fact that we need to address the issue.

Sandra White: Thank you.

John Pentland: Mr Emery, I am not too sure that I picked up on your answer to Elaine Murray's question about what suggestions for savings you have rejected. Could you give some examples?

Vic Emery: Either I did not answer the question properly or I was not very conclusive in what I said. We have rejected no suggestions at the moment as to how we might make savings. We are prioritising the initiatives that are coming forward so that we can concentrate on the ones

that give us the best return for the investment that we need to make.

John Foley: There are timing issues associated with some of the savings and savings plans that come forward. We touched at the beginning on ICT projects such as i6 and C3. Those are priority projects that require a large degree of dedicated resource, and the savings do not manifest themselves immediately. Although we consider those savings plans and implement them, there will be other savings plans that come forward that we will have to give equal consideration to but which we will not be able to implement immediately because we have to wait until some of the projects that are already under way come to fruition.

John Pentland: If I am right, you have not rejected any savings proposed by the chief constable. The reason for my question is clear: do you base your assumption on meeting the savings or on the impact that a saving may have on the community?

Vic Emery: When a business proposition is put before us, there is what we call a business case, and there will be an equality assessment and community assessment attached to any business case. I want to make it clear that we are not saying that we want to make savings at the expense of the service. We want to maintain the service. We are interested in the outcomes that the service delivers to local communities, and we do not dilute that for the sake of cost.

John Pentland: Have you ever challenged a business case that has been put before you?

Vic Emery: You would need a lot of time, but if you were to look at what happens at board meetings you would see that we challenge quite robustly all the business cases that are placed before us.

John Pentland: Having challenged them, have you ever changed a decision or a recommendation associated with a business case?

Vic Emery: We have encouraged the police to change direction or to take other things into account in our challenges.

John Pentland: Unifying Police Scotland has obviously created challenges. My questions are associated with the scheme of administration and just how rigorous the SPA is in making the challenges that you have mentioned.

When I read through your scheme of administration, I wondered just how well you are equipped to be challenging, because I see that you are allowed to vire in the region of between £200,000 and £500,000. If you are moving money from one budget to another, that suggests to me that one budget has £200,000 more than it should

have had. Are you aware of the actual expenditure?

In your finance report, there is a £1.5 million saving on police officer costs in the six months to 30 September. Is the assumption that has been made well off the mark? How confident can we be in the SPA when it comes to challenging the budget? Can we have a more robust performance from you?

10:30

Vic Emery: I will let John Foley deal with the detail of the question, as you went into some figures—from a governance point of view, that is what I allow the chief executive to do.

We have put the scheme of delegation and the scheme of administration in place in order to give proper and robust challenge. As far as I am aware, that has not been varied at all. Committees have been set up, most notably in the finance area. The finance and investment committee challenges everything that comes forward, and it needs to see where all the money is being spent, why it is being spent in the way that it is and whether there is good value for money.

I invite John Foley to deal with the detail.

John Foley: As Vic Emery has said, we have robust governance processes and procedures. The scheme of administration is only one of those, but it is one of the most important, because it leads into other items such as the scheme of delegation within the SPA and Police Scotland. We also have framework agreements and so on with the Scottish Government.

Absolutely no virement has taken place from one budget to another. The provision is there to create flexibility. However, it has not been applied, and it would not be applied unless I was consulted as accountable officer.

As regards budgets overall, we have a finance and investment committee, as Vic Emery has pointed out. That committee meets once a month. All the budgets and the financial performance are robustly challenged in relation to both revenue expenditure and capital expenditure, and explanations are given at that point as to variances.

A weekly finance meeting also takes place between senior officers in the SPA and Police Scotland. I chair that meeting, and we consider and challenge budgets on a weekly basis, then monthly through the committee, and then through the board. Finance reports are presented to the board, and all board members have an opportunity to question the director of finance at Police Scotland, as well as the chief constable, in relation to all budgetary matters.

John Pentland: Could you tell me how many devolved budgets there are?

John Foley: There is a degree of devolution in relation to devolved budgets at commander level, but it is restricted, as you will understand, because more than 90 per cent of the policing budgets relate to people costs, and those costs are already there. Local matters such as overtime or small purchases of goods and services locally—community-type purchases—are devolved at that level. There are 14 commands. That is the degree to which such devolution takes place.

John Pentland: I believe that you have a £58 million capital budget for this year, but that, to date, only £4.5 or £5 million of it has been spent. Considering that we are only six months away from the end of the financial year, can you give us some assurance that that money will be spent?

John Foley: Yes, indeed. As recently as last week, I went through the capital budget forecast in great detail with Police Scotland's director of finance. We will spend the capital budget this year as intended.

As at the end of September, there are timing issues, but only because an element of expenditure on some of the projects that we are working on, such as i6, comes into the second half of the year, as planned. As I say, we will spend that budget.

We are confident that we will achieve the savings for this year. We have saved £11 million in 2012 and £64 million to £65 million in 2013-14—that has been audited and finalised. Hopefully—I mean that we are forecasting this—the total will be £68 million this year. Everything is on course for delivery at the end of the financial year.

Vic Emery: We had a board meeting last week at which Police Scotland was questioned extensively on the budget. It reassured the SPA that the capital budget will be spent this year on bona fide projects.

John Pentland: Do you mean the projects that were identified at the start of the financial year?

Vic Emery: Yes.

John Pentland: I ask because I am concerned that, when an organisation is unable to carry forward its capital moneys, any good officer is able to pull a project off the shelf when it gets to the end of the year and the money gets spent on that. Is the money being spent on what was identified at the beginning of the year?

Vic Emery: Yes, we have a capital spend plan that is presented when the budget is presented and we monitor it carefully.

John Pentland: Will you confirm that there will be no underspend?

John Foley: There will not be any underspend.

The Convener: Someone asked what forensic was, and that was what they call forensic.

Roderick Campbell: About this time last year, we had evidence from Chief Constable House that more than 300 police officers in Scotland were funded solely by local authorities. Is the Scottish Police Authority able to tell us what the position is today in relation to local authorities funding police officers, or should I address that to the chief constable?

Vic Emery: You should address the detail of that to the chief constable. John Foley might have the precise numbers but, in round terms, Glasgow City Council provides the budget with about £3 million per year, and the City of Edinburgh Council about £2 million per year, for local policing or additional policing in those areas. They are the only two city councils that contribute outside of the budget that is sent down from the Scottish Government.

John, do you have any details?

John Foley: The details that you gave are broadly correct, so I have no further comment.

Roderick Campbell: Going back to VAT recoverability, my not exactly back-of-the-fag-packet calculation is that, if we had a resource budget of in excess of £1 billion and were talking about recovering VAT of about £24 million, we would probably be talking about a 2.4 per cent increase in the budget. If we apply that to funding for police officers, we would be talking about 430 or so police officers. Do you disagree with that?

John Foley: Do you mean that the £24 million of VAT would pay for X number of police officers?

Roderick Campbell: Yes. I am referring to what the £24 million would pay for.

John Foley: Yes, obviously, if we were to take it to that level, the £24 million could be expressed as an offering of how many more police officers we would have. It could fund other resources, such as additional air support.

The Convener: I tried to get an answer to that question. What does that money mean? What would it purchase?

John Foley: Indeed, convener.

The Convener: Roderick Campbell has obviously been working on that with his abacus for some time.

Roderick Campbell: I said that it was just a rough calculation.

We have heard evidence from the previous couple of witness panels about the report from HM inspectorate of constabulary in Scotland on local

policing in Fife, about morale being affected by the pace and nature of the change and about the “family feel” in Fife having gone. I appreciate that it is perhaps difficult for the authority to monitor the position, but do the witnesses have any comments on that?

Vic Emery: Again, John Foley can address the detail. As you know, we are 18 months into a major programme that will reform the police as we move forward. It is a known fact that, with any such big programme, there is discomfort among the people who are involved. There can be all sorts of ramifications. Low morale might be one of them—I am not saying that it is, but it might be. Uncertainty brings that sort of feeling with it.

I am getting information that morale is not as high as we would like it to be. I balance that with the fact that we are in a reform programme and, therefore, some of that effect is almost inevitable.

As part of our workforce engagement programme, we will conduct a survey so that, rather than speculate, we can get some hard facts. Everyone who works in Police Scotland and the SPA will be asked to participate in an employee survey so that we can assess the situation for ourselves.

John Foley: I would like to add some detail to that. It is widely recognised that this is an issue that we need to monitor closely, and we do that through our governance structures, primarily the human resources and remuneration committee. As Vic Emery said, a survey is planned and will take place prior to the end of the financial year; thereafter, a regular survey will be taken every two years, which is widely recognised as an appropriate time frame to attend to such matters.

Christian Allard: On police attitudes and morale, we were told by different witness panels that changes to pay and conditions, particularly around pensions, may be the elephant in the room. We are planning an increase of about £10 million for the 2015-16 budget, but how much is the pensions issue affecting morale? How much is the uncertainty about the money you will have to provide for police pensions a problem for you? When do you think that you will have clarification from Westminster on how much you will have in your budget for pensions in 2015-16?

John Foley: As Calum Steele suggested earlier, pensions are a concern among police officers, as they are across the public sector. We cannot underestimate the impact of that.

The SPA does not hold the budget for police officer pension costs, which are met centrally by the Scottish Government, so it does not impact us. However, we are acutely aware of the impact on individuals and on staff morale of the increase in pension contributions that people are having to

make at a time when inflation is outstripping wage increases.

Christian Allard: Some of my colleagues talked about the extra hours that some officers have to work, particularly superintendents. We talked with other witness panels about the trend of more officers working over the weekend. Is it time to review the services that Police Scotland should provide? Is it too soon after the change to a single force to do that? Should we have a review now to see what services Police Scotland should provide, particularly in relation to overtime and weekend working?

Vic Emery: We understand pretty much the services that Police Scotland delivers to communities. We have active engagement with all the local authorities and their security committees. A very positive relationship has been built up over the past period and we do not get any negativity from those committees with regard to the services that the police are delivering to their communities.

On overtime levels, we are interested in the cost of delivering policing, and the cost of overtime is a part of that. The chief constable is responsible for the direction and control of the people who report to him, and therefore he determines overtime and the deployment of the people under his command.

Christian Allard: Will that not be a challenge for the budget? We heard that there was salami slicing of the budget and that there is a danger that a smaller budget will affect policing levels. Given the reform that we have had over the past two years, is it not time to think of other reforms and perhaps to rethink police duties?

10:45

Vic Emery: We are only one and a half years into a very substantial reform project and many projects are yet to deliver cashable and non-cashable savings. We need to get those programmes well under way. We started that this week, and yesterday we had a meeting with academics, Police Scotland and the Scottish Government to look at where we think policing should be in five, 10 and 15 years' time. We looked at the demographic pressures on society, how society will evolve and the level of diversification in and immigration into Scotland, and we started to look at where we want policing to be in the future, what policing will cost, what skill sets policing needs and what the balance will be between uniformed and non-uniformed people. All that work has started.

Alison McInnes: Before I ask my question, I want to comment on what you said about staff morale. You seemed almost to imply that low morale was inevitable because of the change. I would caution against that. It may be a bit telling

that it has taken you two years to survey your staff—that in itself is a concern.

We heard last week from Derek Penman that the challenges in balancing the 2015-16 budget will be harder than previous challenges and that if we do not get the balance right there will be an impact on "operational effectiveness" and "police performance", and perhaps "falling service ... levels". Chief Superintendent Rennie said that his staff faced an "intolerable burden". How do you react to those two statements?

John Foley: Mr Penman was absolutely correct when he made those comments about the budget. The challenge does become greater. As we move through a period of generating significant efficiencies, as we have done over the past two years, invariably it becomes harder to save. We have been set the challenge of saving £1.1 billion by 2026, and both the SPA and Police Scotland are confident that we can meet that challenge.

Mr Rennie's comments represent his view. We have a meeting with the ASPs tomorrow afternoon—we have regular meetings to discuss these matters—and we would look to have more detail that we would hope to address.

Alison McInnes: How can you say that you are confident that you can meet the challenge when, one and a half years into the savings, staff associations are telling us that they face an "intolerable burden"?

Vic Emery: The SPA is the governance body for the police and it has a finance scrutiny function, which works very well, and we work very well with Police Scotland. If you do the figures you will see that the savings are recurring. Through the savings that have been achieved to date and those that will be achieved this year, we are well on track to deliver the required £1.1 billion savings by 2026.

Alison McInnes: So you would not support a call for a slowing down of the timetable for reform. You said earlier that you were moving into the transformational stage, which requires thought and careful decision making. Is there a risk that short-term decisions that are driven by purely financial and budget constraints will not lead to the sustainable force that we need to see in 2026?

Vic Emery: As I said in response to a previous question, we are not making short-term decisions. We have a highly skilled group of people from Police Scotland, the Scottish Government, the SPA and academia looking at where we want to take policing in the next five, 10 and 15 years. The decisions that we make on the business plans that are brought before us are not a quick fix.

We do not look for a quick fix. We want to look at anything that can save us money without

diluting the service, and we do not want to put in place anything that might prejudice long-term savings. That is absolutely certain.

Alison McInnes: We are clearly trying to establish whether the budget is sufficient to meet the needs of the Police Service of Scotland for the forthcoming year. Will you give us an assurance that if you think at any point that the budget is not sufficient to deliver a safe service, you will alert the Parliament to that?

Vic Emery: Yes. The authority's job as the governance body is to ensure that all the savings that are available to be taken out of the system are taken out and offered back to the people of Scotland. We do not take short-term decisions when doing that. Police Scotland needs to satisfy me that the actions that it is taking will deliver the savings. Thus far, it has done that: as you know, £63-odd million of savings were delivered in the first year. There is a requirement to deliver a further £68 million of savings this year, and we are on track to do that. Police Scotland has reassured me that those significant savings can be delivered too.

As we move into the third year, the law of diminishing returns means that savings will get more and more difficult to make. We are moving from a consolidating position to a more reforming position because we need to do things differently. Once we have got rid of duplication and once we have got rid of all the low-hanging fruit—I hate that term—we need to ask how we can do things differently, more appropriately and in a way that will be more cost effective for the public purse.

Alison McInnes: But in coming to those decisions, you must take the community along with you, as I am sure you have learned to your cost. It takes time to do that, so I press you on whether you think that the timetable for savings is achievable.

Vic Emery: I think that the timetable for achieving the savings is a challenge, but I do not think that we have exhausted all avenues to secure more savings.

The Convener: Thank you. We have six minutes, and two members—John Pentland and Sandra White—have questions. If they ask short questions, we will see if we can fit them both in.

John Pentland: It was good to hear Mr Emery's comment about getting rid of the low-hanging fruit. That means Mr Emery thinks that the closing of police office counters and of police stations is low-hanging fruit; people in my community thought differently.

However, my question—

The Convener: I will let you ask your question, but make it a quick one, please.

John Pentland: My question is on morale, which I believe is lowest among police support staff. It appears that the burden of the efficiencies has fallen on them. What assurance can you give me, very quickly, that we will soon be near a balanced workforce? By what further percentage will the civilian police support staff be reduced to meet that target?

The Convener: Sandra, can we have your question now?

Sandra White: Thank you. In relation to reform of the police service and the budget, I will just pick up on the point about policing for the likes of pop concerts, sporting events, political events and so on, and the ability of the police to charge for that. I am put in mind of the recent Lib Dem event, which it has not paid Police Scotland for yet—

Alison McInnes: We—

The Convener: Stop, all of you, stop.

Sandra White: It is a valid point, convener.

The Convener: Mr Emery, I do not expect you to comment on that point. We are throwing things in at the very end. There is a question about support staff and a question about charging for events, whatever they are—for example, Edinburgh's hogmanay and so on. You have four minutes to answer those questions. If you cannot finish in that time, I will understand—we can get a written response from you instead. I am sorry to curtail the session, but there we are.

Vic Emery: I will be the first to acknowledge that Police Scotland and the SPA did not communicate some of their actions effectively in the past. I do not demur from that at all. Having said that, we have not done anything that would prejudice the local community. Closing police offices and redundant houses has no material effect on the outcomes of policing in the areas where those activities happened.

Sorry, what was the next question?

The Convener: It was about the balance of the workforce.

Vic Emery: In answer to questions from Alison McInnes and, I think, Roderick Campbell, I have already said that we are engaging in a piece of work that looks at where we need to take policing. It would be premature to say that there is a balance between the uniformed people and the non-uniformed people. We need to consider the skill sets that we need and who will be best to deliver those skill sets in taking policing forward on a best-value basis. It is too black and white to say that we need a percentage of this and a percentage of that.

With regard to pop concerts and other commercial events, Police Scotland drew up a

charging policy and presented it to the Scottish Police Authority. We debated and approved the policy—with amendments—so there is a policy for charging for commercial events.

The Convener: You mentioned commercial events. Is there a charging regime for political marches and events as well?

Vic Emery: If it is for something out of the ordinary, there would be a charging regime, yes.

The Convener: Right. That is fine. We have got through the questions pretty well, we have settled the temperature again and we have two minutes in hand. That concludes the evidence session. I thank the witnesses for their evidence. We will just wait for the signal at 10.58 for the two-minute silence.

10:56

Meeting suspended.

11:02

On resuming—

Subordinate Legislation

Act of Sederunt (Commissary Business) (Amendment) 2014 (SSI 2014/265)

The Convener: We have one negative instrument to consider. The instrument makes provision for commissary business on the winding up of deceased persons' estates that has been started at Dingwall sheriff court to be continued at Inverness sheriff court after Dingwall sheriff court closes on 31 January 2015.

The Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee did not draw the attention of the Parliament to the instrument.

As members have no comments on the instrument, are they content to make no recommendation on it?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: We now move into private session.

11:02

Meeting continued in private until 11:19.

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