



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

### **PUBLIC AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Wednesday 3 December 2014

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**Wednesday 3 December 2014**

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**PUBLIC AUDIT COMMITTEE**  
**19<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2014, Session 4**

**CONVENER**

\*Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)

\*Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)

\*Colin Keir (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)

\*Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab)

\*Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)

\*Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD)

\*David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:**

Antony Clark (Audit Scotland)

Caroline Gardner (Auditor General for Scotland)

Douglas Sinclair (Accounts Commission)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Jane Williams

**LOCATION**

The Sir Alexander Fleming Room (CR3)



# Scottish Parliament

## Public Audit Committee

*Wednesday 3 December 2014*

*[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:01]*

### Interests

**The Convener (Hugh Henry):** Welcome to the 19th meeting in 2014 of the Public Audit Committee. We have apologies from Ken Macintosh. He is running late, but he will be with us at some point.

The first item on the agenda is an invitation to declare interests. Members will be aware of significant changes in Scottish National Party committee membership across all committees, and that Bruce Crawford, Willie Coffey and James Dornan have left the committee.

Bruce Crawford was not with us for that long but, even in that short time, he brought his own inimitable style to our meetings. I have known him for many years, since before the Parliament was established, and it has always been a pleasure to work alongside him. James Dornan was a member for some time, and was equally assiduous in his work.

I want to make particular mention of Willie Coffey. He was a member of this committee since just after the 2007 elections, so he was certainly the longest-serving member of this committee out of any of its current membership and, perhaps, out of any of the previous members. Over that time, we have all been struck by his attention to detail. Also, his life experience was useful with regard to many of the reports that we considered. I am not sure what he has moved on to, but I am sure that he will bring to it the same attention to detail and commitment that he brought to this committee. We appreciated the efforts of all of those members, but I think that we need to pay particular tribute to Willie Coffey on account of his long-standing service to the committee.

**Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Hear, hear.

**The Convener:** We have a formidable group of MSPs to replace those members: Nigel Don, Gil Paterson and David Torrance. David Torrance has already been a substitute member of the committee but, for formal reasons, I invite all our new members to declare any relevant interests that they might have.

**Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP):** It is a pleasure to be here. I simply draw members'

attention to my entry in the register of members' interests. I do not believe that I have anything to add to that in the context of this committee.

**Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP):** I have nothing to add to my entry in the register of members' interests, which is available for the public or the committee to peruse.

**David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):** I, too, have nothing to add to my entry in the register of members' interests.

## Decision on Taking Business in Private

10:03

**The Convener:** The second item on the agenda concerns a decision on taking business in private. Members will note that we have already decided to take item 5 in private. Do we agree to take items 4 and 6 in private, too?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

## Section 23 Report

### “Community planning: Turning ambition into action”

10:04

**The Convener:** Our third item concerns a section 23 report, “Community planning: Turning ambition into action”. This is a joint report by the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission. We have with us Caroline Gardner, the Auditor General; Douglas Sinclair, the chair of the Accounts Commission, who has had many roles in Scottish public life over many years and has probably a unique insight into the workings of the public sector in Scotland; and Antony Clark, the assistant director of best value, scrutiny and improvement in Audit Scotland.

I invite the Auditor General to make an opening statement.

**Caroline Gardner (Auditor General for Scotland):** I will introduce the report and, as always, we will jointly answer any questions that members have.

Some of you might remember that, in March 2013, the chair of the Accounts Commission and I gave evidence to the committee on our previous report on community planning. The new report provides an update on progress since then and gives a sense of the direction of travel on community planning in the context of the statement of ambition.

Community planning is really important because the Government sees it as a central plank in its plans for public service reform, in making the shift to prevention, and in meeting the continuing pressures on public finances. Therefore, how well community planning partnerships are working is a central part of the plans for all those important areas of reform.

In our report, we state that aspects of community planning are improving. All the partners are more actively involved than they were at the time of our previous report and are now agreeing shared priorities that they can work on jointly in the context of community planning. There is a better understanding of the resources that they have available to them, and they are recognising the importance of prevention and thinking about what they can do to make that a reality. Those are really important building blocks, but there is much more to do.

For example, this time around, we still found little evidence of effective leadership, scrutiny and challenge in community planning partnership boards, and many community planning

partnerships are still not clear about what they are expected to achieve or about the specific improvements that they are aiming to make.

The Scottish Government, the national community planning group and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities have an important leadership role in overcoming those shortcomings, and they have taken steps to promote the importance of community planning.

In July, the national community planning group issued a set of principles to partnerships, focusing on prevention, joint resourcing, community engagement and the reduction of inequalities. That was intended to set out an ambitious but realistic improvement agenda for community planning, based on the experience so far of implementing the statement of ambition.

The national community planning group, Government and COSLA now need to work together to set out what the refocused approach means in practice, what they expect of community planning partnerships and how their success in implementing the new principles will be assessed.

We think that two important aspects of that work will be: addressing the uncertainty about the extent to which the focus of community planning should be on local needs or on national priorities; and providing greater clarity about the role that community planning partnerships should play in public service reform.

We found that committee planning partnerships have begun to identify the resources that they have available to deliver their priorities, but they are not yet targeting those resources as effectively as they could. That is particularly important as pressures on budgets and staff tighten, and partners will have to make difficult choices about allocating their resources between competing priorities. They will also have to work closely with local communities to ensure that the significant changes that are needed to how public services are delivered command public support.

In addition, public bodies are held to account mostly for the performance of the mainstream services that they deliver and the achievement of national targets. That can create additional tensions. As I have recently reported, the focus of national health service boards on meeting challenging financial and performance targets each year makes it difficult for them to think about longer-term outcomes and to do the necessary long-term financial planning to move in that direction. We think that competing pressures on resources might hold back the shift to prevention, as partner organisations will initially need to continue to deliver their current services while investing in the new services that are needed for the future.

The lack of a coherent national framework for assessing the performance and pace of community planning partnerships is another hurdle. It means that there is no overall picture of how individual community planning partnerships are performing and what progress is being made towards the implementation of the statement of ambition. The lack of that clear national picture makes it hard for Government and COSLA to identify which community planning partnerships need the most support and which particular areas they are finding it hardest to get right.

The report makes a number of recommendations for the Scottish Government, the national community planning group, COSLA and community planning partnerships themselves. I will focus on the ones that are directly related to Government, but members will see the rest in the report.

First, we would like the Scottish Government and COSLA to work together to set out what their refocused approach means for the statement of ambition and what they expect of community planning partnerships across Scotland. That includes developing a national framework for assessing and reporting progress and implementing the statement of ambition.

Secondly, because this is complex and challenging work, we would also like the Scottish Government and COSLA, working with the Improvement Service and others, to put in place a programme of well-targeted, practical support for community planning partnerships in the areas that most need improvement.

Finally, we would like to see the Scottish Government holding central Government bodies and the NHS to account more consistently and directly for their contribution to community planning as well as for delivering the services for which they are primarily responsible.

As always, Douglas Sinclair, Antony Clark and I will be happy to answer questions from the committee.

**The Convener:** Okay. Thank you for that.

I seem to remember discussions about community planning when I was a council leader in the mid-1990s and Douglas Sinclair was the chief executive of COSLA. Am I right in thinking that the debate has been going on for that long?

**Douglas Sinclair (Accounts Commission):** Absolutely, convener. Community planning dates from 2003—the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 brought it into being. To some extent, it had a fallow period until the statement of ambition was jointly announced by COSLA and the Scottish Government in 2013. That gave it a renewed emphasis. As Caroline Gardner indicated, we

found in our audits that the enthusiasm and commitment have, if anything, increased, which is a positive.

**The Convener:** You talk about enthusiasm and commitment increasing, but it appears from the report that community planning is having little practical impact across Scotland.

We have discussed community planning since the 1990s—as you said, it came in in the legislation in 2003—but according to the report

“Many CPPs are ... not clear about what they are expected to achieve”.

If community planning is worth anything and is of value, surely people should be clear about what is expected. If it is of no value, why are we bothering to persist with something that people are doing nothing about?

The report says:

“Governance and accountability in CPPs remains weak and there is limited evidence of challenge at a board level”.

This is not the first time that we have discussed public sector boards. Not only do people not know what they are supposed to be doing—which is, frankly, outrageous—but when people are in a position to do something, they are not challenging. Where is the public accountability and scrutiny if people are not challenging and do not know what they are doing? What is the point?

**Douglas Sinclair:** Perhaps I can kick off on that question; Caroline Gardner can then come in.

The argument for community planning is as strong now as it was in 2003. Essentially, that argument is that the needs of individuals or communities can seldom be met by one single organisation.

Let us look at crime. The control and solving of crime are matters for the police, but its causes are outwith the control of the police. They are to do with bad housing, poor health, bad education, bad planning and so on. Those are all issues that the other partners can play their part in resolving. Therefore, the case for community planning still exists.

On your second point, part of the difficulty is that there has been an unrealistic expectation of what community planning can deliver. It cannot solve all the problems, but it can add value on cross-cutting issues, particularly in reducing inequality. It is taking community planning partnerships some time to understand where their added value really can make a difference.

Your third point was about public sector boards. In our report, we make the point that the partnerships are voluntary; they are not statutory bodies. There is a statutory duty on each of the

partners to participate, but CPPs are not statutory bodies; rather, they are voluntary partnerships.

The people around the table in the partnerships come from different backgrounds and have different roles and accountabilities. That makes building a sense of trust and building relationships quite difficult—we highlight that in the report. Our sense is that community planning partnerships have not invested enough in understanding the complexity of the relationships around the board. For example, a councillor is not the same as a non-executive member of a health board, and the chief executive of a council has a set of responsibilities and authorities that is different from that of the chief executive of a health board.

There are examples of effective community planning partnership boards. I have spent time trying to understand how they can make a difference and what scope there is for them to make a difference. All community planning partnership boards need to spend more time understanding the nature of the relationships and where they can make a difference.

The point that you make about accountability is a fair one. There are different accountabilities. The council is accountable to the local electorate, and the health board is ultimately accountable to Parliament. That is why our report strongly recommends that a national framework be jointly developed by the Scottish Government and COSLA to assess the performance of community planning partnerships and to ensure that the ones that particularly need support are the ones at which support is targeted.

10:15

**The Convener:** My criticism is not of the people who produced the report. My concern is about what you found at the local level.

You make the point that the case for community planning is as strong now as it has ever been. I accept that. You say—in mitigation—that there are people on the boards who come from different backgrounds. I understand that, but I question why any organisation, whether the council or any other partner, would put someone on a board if it did not think that that person was capable of performing the duties required. If there is insufficient clarity or distinction around roles and responsibilities, that all needs to be worked out. However, if the boards are simply rubber-stamping whatever is put in front of them, with no criticism, scrutiny or challenge, what is the point? Are we not just wasting good public money on a model that is not working? If community planning remains as important now as ever it was, why is the commitment not there to make it work?

**Caroline Gardner:** Your point about confusion around roles is at the heart of the questions that you have been asking. The statement of ambition and last year's refocusing on the four principles of prevention, inequalities and so on are important steps in the right direction. Our audit work found that, in spite of those steps, local people who are on the CPP boards are still confused about how far what they are doing should be about local priorities, how far the CPP has to take account of national priorities and the national performance framework, how far it should be focusing on prevention and how far it should go in looking at all public services in the area. As Douglas Sinclair said, no partnership can do everything; CPPs are not set up to do that, they do not have the resources to do it—we have a whole range of other public bodies to do that work. We want the Government and COSLA to sharpen the focus on what CPPs can do and build on the good practice that is there.

We have seen some very good practice, with partnerships thinking about what their area needs and what they can do. CPPs have also been addressing the real questions around accountability that can make things difficult, particularly when they are struggling to make the progress that we all want to see.

**The Convener:** Before I bring in Mary Scanlon, I have a final question. Which is the key organisation in starting to make happen what you say is necessary? Whose responsibility is it?

**Caroline Gardner:** The Scottish Government has the overall responsibility for setting policy, on which it has been working very closely with COSLA and the wider national community planning group. Our recommendation is to those three parties. The national group should be doing the things that we have described: clarifying what CPPs are for; improving the accountability arrangements; and making sure that all public bodies are held to account for their contribution to community planning.

**Douglas Sinclair:** We do not want to lose the ambition in the statement of ambition, but, if anything, the statement of ambition was overambitious. It talked about the boards being genuine boards with all the authority and accountability of a board. That cannot be ascribed to a voluntary partnership so some of that language needs to be modified.

There is also confusion in the statement of ambition about the role of CPPs in public sector reform. The statement of ambition says that CPPs should be at the heart of the development of health and social care partnerships, but that is not what is happening on the ground. CPPs are confused about the nature of their relationship with the developing health and social care

partnerships. We think that it would benefit community planning partnerships if the statement of ambition was more rooted in the reality of what is actually happening out there.

**Mary Scanlon:** I will turn back the clock 18 months to when we looked at Audit Scotland's 2013 report "Improving community planning in Scotland", which says:

"ten years after community planning was given a statutory basis, CPPs are not able to show that they have had a significant impact in delivering improved outcomes ... have not been clear enough about the key priorities for improvement ... Too often, everything has seemed to be a priority, meaning that nothing has been a priority".

No one is taking any responsibility.

I remember that members of the committee were, to say the least, a bit disappointed about the progress made after 10 years. However, we were given many warm words and we were told that lots of things were happening, such as the statement of ambition. Because of that, the committee thought in good faith that CPPs were on track.

When I got the new report last week, I thought, "Hey, here we are—we are getting a positive update on CPPs." That is not what we have. There has barely been any progress. There is

"ambiguity both nationally and locally about the extent to which the focus of community planning should be on local needs or about delivering national priorities."

Neither local nor national Government has a scooby what it is doing. The Scottish Government

"is not yet consistently holding central government bodies or the NHS to account for their performance within CPPs."

I will not read out all the report, but it also says:

"There is little evidence that CPP boards are yet demonstrating the levels of leadership and challenge set out in the Statement of Ambition"—

the statement that we were told 18 months ago would be the answer. The report says:

"They lack a focus on how community planning will improve outcomes for specific communities and reduce the gap ... between the most and least deprived".

That is a key part of the new First Minister's approach, which I support. Furthermore,

"The Statement of Ambition places community planning at the core ... but ... CPPs are not clear about ... their specific role".

I direct members to the bold text between paragraphs 30 and 31. The Parliament is to have significant new powers, but all the organisations out there are still working in little silos; we also had to introduce legislation to get the NHS to work with social services and councils. With more powers coming to the Parliament, we are still being told:

"The links between community planning and national public service reform programmes are not clear".

To put it mildly, I am really disappointed, because we got a lot of warm words. After 10 years, there was pretty much no progress and, 18 months later, there is still confusion locally. That is not good enough. Am I right? Am I reading the report accurately?

**Caroline Gardner:** You have summarised the concerns that we reported—not always in the language that we would use, but in the right direction.

**Mary Scanlon:** I quoted the report.

**Caroline Gardner:** You are absolutely right; those are the areas that we have raised concerns about. Equally, we have this time reported on progress on the partnerships working more genuinely as partnerships, agreeing priorities, getting a grip on the resources that they have available and other such matters.

Our recommendations are aimed at taking away some of the barriers that are stopping that progress and at fulfilling the promise of CPPs, especially in the context of a Parliament that will have significant new powers but which will still have financial pressures, and given that inequalities and demographic changes will keep on increasing the pressures on public services.

**Mary Scanlon:** The fact that there are financial pressures is not an excuse for not working together.

**Caroline Gardner:** Not at all.

**Mary Scanlon:** That is the basis for more advantage and more positive outcomes from working together. How can bodies agree shared priorities but not work them through? I do not understand that, because shared priorities are agreed—you have said that twice: once in the opening statement and just now—yet at the local level people are confused, national Government is not telling local government what to do and there is no tie-in or integration between national and local priorities. The agreed priorities are not working through the system.

**Caroline Gardner:** I shall kick off on that, and I can see that Douglas Sinclair wants to add something. In a sense, agreeing the shared priorities is the easy bit.

**Mary Scanlon:** But bodies are not delivering them.

**Caroline Gardner:** Once the priorities have been established, the hard bit is deciding who will do what, which people, buildings and other resources will be put behind that effort and how we will know that that is working. Given that the priorities often involve things that will take a generation to have an effect, we need to decide

how we will know that we are moving in the right direction.

We have seen some pockets where that is being done well. The report that we published on Glasgow community planning partnership showed that partners were focused on a small number of priorities that have the potential to get to the roots of poverty, ill health and inequality and to make a big difference over time.

In other places, we are not seeing that approach, and the recommendations that we make are aimed at ensuring that at Government level and at local level people can learn from the experience of places where the approach is working well and can take away barriers that make things harder, such as the ambiguity that we mentioned. That is not the only thing, but it would help.

**Mary Scanlon:** I know that Douglas Sinclair wants to speak, but I have a final question. Ten years after community planning began, it scores only one out of 10. Eighteen months after your first report on the lack of progress, there is more lack of progress. In five years' time, when I am into my glorious retirement and no longer on this committee, will the committee still be asking what is happening to community planning? When do you think that it will happen?

As a member of the committee, which is an important committee of the Parliament, I feel frustrated that I am wasting my time in reading about something on which great promises were made to us. I have read the report from cover to cover to try to find a little gem of progress but, apart from one or two local examples of best practice, it is not there. When will it happen?

**The Convener:** The frustration is not with the people who have produced the report; it is with the failure of those who are responsible for implementation.

**Mary Scanlon:** Precisely.

**Caroline Gardner:** We understand that. We have seen progress since our previous report 18 months ago, but further progress on the scale that we all think is needed will require the Government and community planning partnerships to tackle the things that we have set out in our recommendations. We have made them constructive and challenging and focused on the things that we think need to happen. Without that, there will not be much progress.

**Douglas Sinclair:** I understand Mary Scanlon's frustration. The report is slightly different from our earlier one, in that the recommendations are not targeted at community planning partnerships alone; they are targeted just as much at central Government, COSLA and the national community

planning group, which have to play their part. It would be presumptuous of me to say that, if our recommendations were all implemented, you would see progress in five years' time, but we believe that the recommendations are fundamental if we want community planning to move from where it is to where we all want it to be.

**Mary Scanlon:** Does the leadership need to come from national Government?

**Douglas Sinclair:** Yes—all parts of Government need to be involved. We need leadership from national Government, and we have made recommendations on the need to develop a system of accountability for community planning partnerships to assess their performance. COSLA must play its role in encouraging local authorities to be more active in community planning and, as Caroline Gardner has indicated, it must challenge them more effectively and in more detail, just as national Government does in holding to account the bodies for which it is responsible.

There is an issue of challenge across the board for all the partners. The national community planning group needs to revise the statement of ambition to root it more in reality and to set stretching targets. We must also encourage community planning partnerships to develop more effectively with a limited number of priorities. If Glasgow can do it, why can other community planning partnerships not do it?

**Colin Keir (Edinburgh Western) (SNP):** Everyone who has dealt with reports on community planning has experienced a degree of frustration, and those of us who have been local authority members know why such issues come out in reports. What Mr Sinclair said brings to mind paragraph 49 of the report, on dealing with local councillors. It states:

"Local councillors have a democratic community leadership role".

They are put there by the people democratically and are used to making decisions on budgets for local authorities.

Although people can become members of NHS boards, such boards are not seen as easy to get attached to. Councillors have a democratic right to make decisions and NHS board members have a right to deal with their budgets—I am just using those as examples of people who have a right to deal with their budgets in the way that they see fit. There are obviously strains between boards when we start to talk about integrating health and social care.

10:30

You made quite a lot of councillors' democratic role in that paragraph, but the CPPs do not look terribly democratic across the board—only over a particular section. How democratic are they when we start to bring in third sector partners or the police?

This is not an easy nut to crack—I can see why from paragraph 49 and, perhaps, the one after. There is a small, identifiable cause of friction. Central Government can say that something must be done to make things better—it can give a diktat, if you like—but we need to reconcile that at the sharp end of where decisions are made. Do you agree that we have quite a bit more work to do there than at the more centralised end?

**Douglas Sinclair:** The challenge for CPPs is to understand accountability. As you rightly say, each partner has its own accountability—the council is accountable to the local electorate, the health board is accountable to the Parliament and so on—but we need to encourage partners to recognise their shared accountability around the CPP table as well as their separate accountabilities.

I take issue slightly with your talking about "their budgets". It is the public's budget. All public money is the public's budget.

**Colin Keir:** I am sorry—it is all very well to look at the matter in that way, but it does not work out that way. A council leader—I note Mr Henry's experience—who is wondering how to make best use of his budget does not think, "This budget belongs to the NHS"; he thinks, "This is my responsibility." That is what I am getting at.

**Douglas Sinclair:** I understand the point that you are making. Part of the problem with the statement of ambition is that it was perhaps overambitious in saying that all resources would be put on the table. That was never going to happen. The council has the prime responsibility for delivering education and social work. Equally, the health board has the prime responsibility for health services.

We are talking about budgets in policy areas such as drugs, alcohol and community safety, which overlap. Those are the ones that partners can put on the table. To go back to a point that Mary Scanlon made, if we join those budgets up, we can use them better. If, instead of each partner developing its own budget strategy, those budgets are put on the table at the community planning partnership, where budgets and interests overlap, they can make a difference.

The challenge for CPPs is not to argue about mainstream budgets but to get into budget areas that overlap and where they can make a difference

to reduce inequality and crime. That is the culture change and that is the journey that CPPs are on.

**Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD):** Have CPPs made any measurable difference to the health and social care partnerships process?

**Caroline Gardner:** I will kick off and Douglas Sinclair will add to what I say. It is early days, but we heard strongly through the audit work that is behind the report that community planning partnerships are not clear about their role in health and social care integration. The guidance says that they should be central to it, but we have separate bodies with separate geographical boundaries, and the interaction between them needs to be clarified to ensure that they understand what they are doing, that everybody pulls in the same direction and that any read-acrosses between the responsibilities on health and social care integration and what the community planning partnership does are understood, managed and planned for.

**Tavish Scott:** That sounds as if CPPs have made no difference at all, to be honest.

**Caroline Gardner:** It is probably too early to say that. The difference that they can make is not clear to CPPs or to us, because of the way in which the guidance has been developed.

**Tavish Scott:** I am trying to be specific. If we cannot judge whether CPPs can make any difference to a measurable outcome for us all that the Parliament has agreed to in a law, what is the point of them, to use the convener's phrase? I take your point that it is early, but we have asked the public sector to do a specific thing, and CPPs are playing no role.

**Caroline Gardner:** The question is how clear it is to partnerships and the Government exactly what contribution CPPs should be expected to make to health and social care integration. We make the wider point in the report about the link between public service reform and health and social care integration, which is a key part of public service reform. The links between those things and the contribution that CPPs should be expected to make, and how that links to CPPs' responsibilities for the wider prevention agenda on other health and social care issues, are not clear to people on the ground. Measuring CPPs' contribution is difficult and possibly unfair.

**Tavish Scott:** I totally take that point. Would it be fair to say that, when Parliament passed the legislation on health and social care integration, neither the Government, COSLA nor anyone else provided clear instruction on what CPPs' role should be in it?

**Caroline Gardner:** A clear statement in the guidance on integration says that CPPs should be

central to it, but it does not say what that means in practice, given the range of expectations that are on CPPs, the different boundaries and the competing priorities of people in CPPs and of integration.

**Tavish Scott:** I totally take that point. However, the policy is specific and clear, and the legislation was passed on a cross-party basis in Parliament, yet Audit Scotland's assessment is that it could not find that CPPs have made any measurable difference to that crucial part of public policy change.

**Caroline Gardner:** I would not expect to be able to see yet whether CPPs have made a difference. I would expect the Government and COSLA to be clear about the contribution that they expect CPPs to make, so that exactly that judgment can be made in the future.

**Tavish Scott:** Those bodies have not made that clear yet.

**Caroline Gardner:** We are not seeing that yet.

**Tavish Scott:** Although we passed the legislation some time ago and the idea has been talked about for years, COSLA and the Government have not made clear what CPPs should do.

**Douglas Sinclair:** To be fair, health and social care partnerships will not come fully into being until April 2016. That point is worth making. The integrated joint boards will become members of the CPPs.

As Caroline Gardner indicated, it is a bit early to say what the relationship will be, but we certainly found a huge amount of confusion over the role that CPPs will play in relation to health and social care integration.

**Tavish Scott:** When I asked the director of my local NHS board how many meetings about all this he had been to over the past three years, he looked at the sky. Directors of NHS boards and chief executives of councils—never mind all the other officials—have been to hundreds of meetings to discuss this, yet the clarity that you seek on CPPs' role has not been provided.

**Douglas Sinclair:** The focus is on the council and the health board making the integrated joint board work in practice. To be fair, the relationship with the CPP is a secondary consideration. The fact that a health and social care partnership is a statutory body that sits alongside a voluntary partnership also creates its own tension.

**Tavish Scott:** I wondered about your recommendations on that. Do you need to be an awful lot firmer? For this to work, do you need to recommend a statutory function, as Mary Scanlon suggested?

**Douglas Sinclair:** That is a matter for the Government. It is not for the Auditor General or the Accounts Commission to express a view on that.

**Tavish Scott:** Of course it is a matter for the Government, but you can make a recommendation.

**Douglas Sinclair:** The Government has decided that health and social care partnerships should be statutory bodies. In the context of public sector reform, it would seem odd to create even more statutory bodies.

**Tavish Scott:** Indeed—that is a reasonable argument.

In paragraph 3, Audit Scotland firmly and rightly points out:

“Partners’ formal lines of accountability are not to the CPP board, but to their own organisation’s board”.

Is that a fundamental failure of the system? You have implied that in your contributions. Is that where it falls down?

**Caroline Gardner:** That is one of the reasons why partners in the central Government and NHS parts of public services are being pulled in two directions. The issue is clearest in the NHS. As we reported previously, NHS boards have been held to account for their financial performance and for their performance every year against the health improvement, efficiency and governance, access and treatment—HEAT—targets. Those targets tend to be on shorter-term things that matter to people but which will not help us to move towards reshaping services, prevention and so on.

We do not think that the position necessarily leads straight to a recommendation on making the partnerships statutory bodies, but it means that we need to balance what people are held to account for. They need to be held to account for their contribution to community planning as well as for delivering the mainstream things that they are required to do. That is true across the piece for NHS and central Government bodies.

**Douglas Sinclair:** Accountability is a difficult concept in relation to voluntary partnerships but, if we leave that aside, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill will place a set of new duties on each partner on committing resources, data, information and participation in CPPs. That will shine a stronger light on individual contributions to making CPPs work. It will be interesting to see how defaulting partners—if I can put it like that—are held to account by their parent body.

**Tavish Scott:** Indeed. Another paragraph that jumped out at me was paragraph 20, which says:

“There are a range of views, both nationally and locally, about the role and purpose of community planning and what it can be expected to achieve.”

You have implied that in your evidence. We have had all the guidance in the world, which it could be argued goes back 20 years—we have certainly had that in more recent times—but we have not even sorted out the basic dichotomy in what CPPs are meant to do.

**Douglas Sinclair:** As Caroline Gardner indicated in her opening remarks, the revised statement by the national community planning group has been helpful. It very much focuses on four key areas and particularly the role of community planning partnerships in reducing inequality. That sharper focus is helpful and in a sense takes away the excuse of CPPs not knowing what they are there to do.

**Tavish Scott:** If I was being a cynical policy maker, I could say that we can all sign up to reducing inequality—absolutely. You will find no one in politics who disagrees with reducing inequality. However, if we cannot sort out a local perspective on how to reduce it or a national policy that boards have to implement, we will, as Mary Scanlon rightly observed, be here in five years’ time saying, “I agree, Mr Sinclair. We passed that policy five years ago and not a blind bit of difference has been made.”

**Douglas Sinclair:** It is not an either/or; it is a both/and. Glasgow’s three priorities all contribute towards the national outcomes. There is a false dichotomy.

**Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP):** As Mary Scanlon has already said, we previously looked at the matter around 18 months ago. I remember our disappointment then that community planning had been running for 10 years and progress had been so slow. There seems to have been some progress, but it seems to be painfully slow. Indeed, I remember our commenting last time that it could be another 10 years before we see a decent impact, which seems extraordinary.

You have highlighted a few areas of concern, one of which is leadership. That concern is consistent through the report and it was consistent in the previous report. Are there any signs of improvement in leadership? At the local level, who normally chairs the CPP? Is there usually an independent chair or someone from the council? Is it usually somebody political?

**Caroline Gardner:** In a moment, I will ask Antony Clark to come in on the specifics of what we found in this year’s audit work.

I think that we are seeing improvements in leadership by all the partners involved in taking seriously what community planning is for, getting

clarity about the things that they will focus on, and being much more transparent about the resources that they bring. What is now needed is to build on the pockets of where that happens very well and to learn from that right across Scotland.

There are some real beacons of good practice. We have referred to Glasgow a couple of times, but we were all very impressed by the difference that its approach is making to some of the most intractable problems in Scotland. That is not happening consistently among the partnerships that we have looked at this year and in our wider experience through audit work.

I ask Antony Clark to say a bit more about how the boards currently work.

**Antony Clark (Audit Scotland):** The majority of CPP boards are chaired by the leader of the council. There are examples of independent chairs, but they are not that common.

To amplify Caroline Gardner's point, we observed across all five audits that we did this year significantly improved attendance, participation and commitment to community planning across the piece, but there is still a long way to go.

**Colin Beattie:** Another issue that you have raised relates to budgets. You have made it clear that CPPs do not control a budget—I would not expect that—but you have also commented that they do not seem to have any influence over the budgets that are set. That seems extraordinary, given that the arrangement is a partnership arrangement and all the other bodies—the NHS and so on—are involved. How can that situation be improved?

**Caroline Gardner:** I will kick off; I am sure that Douglas Sinclair will have a perspective, as well.

The statement of ambition referred to meaningful pre-consideration of budgets. That is a horrible jargony term, but it means that the partners should look at each other's budgets at a point where they can still make a difference, discuss whether the allocation of resources is right, and influence each other to move resources into the things that are most important and that each partner could make a difference in.

It is fair to say that we have not seen much evidence of that so far. In my view, that is not very surprising. The point goes back to the accountability that the report talks about and which Mr Keir touched on previously. It is very difficult to open up the formal accountability for budgets in what in the current financial climate is often a very tight and increasingly difficult process.

What we have seen succeeding and what we focused on in the report was much more about CPPs saying, "Okay, so if our priority is reducing

drug abuse in the area, what resources—what people, buildings and other assets—will we bring to bear on that, and how can we collectively make better use of them?" Can CPPs think about what the health service is putting in, what the police are doing locally, what social care services are doing and what is being done in schools? Can they think about the pot as a single pot and about how they move around what people do, the buildings that they use, and the ways that they work?

That approach looks much more promising than trying to open up budgets at this stage, given the real accountability challenges that there would be in that. Also, it seems to us that having a focus will make more difference than opening up widely the accountability for budgets.

10:45

**Colin Beattie:** Is there any evidence that CPPs are able to influence the budget decisions of their partners? It seems to me that, if CPPs are to achieve progress, at the end of the day it will all come down to money.

**Caroline Gardner:** Influence is working in a very positive way when people are focusing on priorities and shifting what goes in and perhaps influencing each other's decisions about more investment or fewer cuts.

We are also seeing examples of influence in a slightly different context in places where people are talking about health and social care integration. In Highland, which has gone for the lead agency model, there has been discussion about the council putting in more money to support the financial pressures that the health board is facing in relation to services for older people. There is real openness about the resources that are needed, and resource is shifting. However, that tends to be happening either at the margins or in relation to specific issues rather than there being a wider sense of CPPs asking, "What are we collectively bringing to bear on public services in this area?"

**Douglas Sinclair:** That is absolutely right. The issue is not the totality of budgets; it is the budgets in relation to the particular priorities of the CPPs and how CPPs can influence that. That is the key bit.

**Colin Beattie:** One of the key points is that CPPs cannot operate in isolation. You have touched on areas where CPPs have been very successful at tapping into local data and information, but clearly that practice is not uniform. Without the initiatives that you mentioned in the report, which are pretty much one-off initiatives, what data can CPPs tap into as a routine measure to help them reach their decisions? Would that data all come from partner organisations? Would

the CPPs have any capability to get that data themselves?

**Caroline Gardner:** Again, Antony Clark has the details, and I will ask him to comment in a moment.

We would expect to see the partners looking as widely as they can at what problems are facing their part of Scotland, what the strengths are, what the trends are, and what it is that they should be focusing on. They should then be drilling down to their own data to build on that work. We have seen some partnerships where that is starting to work really well and some partnerships where they are really struggling with the idea.

**Antony Clark:** The majority of the analytical support that CPPs receive tends to come from a local authority, but it also involves bringing together data from the police, fire and rescue and the health service to look at patterns of service demand, demographics and social needs in the area. Some of the more advanced partnerships are starting to invest in joint analytical resources to help them to do detailed planning about the different needs in their communities, which helps them to target their resources most effectively.

**Colin Beattie:** All that has a cost. Who is picking up the bill?

**Douglas Sinclair:** I suspect that it is largely the councils. In the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill, that duty to contribute towards the cost is extended to include all the partners.

One of the key issues for CPPs is how well they are resourced. As regards the bodies that support community planning, there is still too much of a sense that community planning is the Saturday job rather than the day job. We need to shift that mindset. We require all the partners to make a bigger contribution towards resourcing community planning more effectively.

**Colin Beattie:** As regards budgets for CPPs, is there any evidence at the moment of partners contributing to costs or, as you said, is all the money coming from the councils?

**Douglas Sinclair:** The money is largely coming from the councils—it is largely absorbed within councils' costs. I do not think that the process is as transparent as it might be.

**Colin Beattie:** That is obviously a concern, because we would expect to see buy-in from the partners and part of that is about writing a cheque, even if it is not a large one.

**Douglas Sinclair:** As I say, when the bill becomes an act, it will increase the potential role of other partners.

You talked about the council's leadership role, with the council chairing the CPP. It is worth

making the point that the bill changes that. The duty of the council to facilitate and maintain community planning is abolished in the bill, so it becomes much more of a joint enterprise—a joint endeavour.

**The Convener:** Colin Beattie raised a point about the costs. Mr Sinclair, you said that the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill will impose a duty on partners to contribute to the costs. In what way will they have to do that and how will it be enforced if it is a legal obligation?

**Douglas Sinclair:** Antony Clark will keep me right, but I think that the bill talks about contributing resources such as information and data. What is not clear in the bill is what happens if one of the partners defaults on its obligation. It is an interesting point about the council being the arbiter. If we take away the council's leadership role, who will resolve a complaint about a partner not making its full contribution? It is fair to say that the bill is silent on that.

**The Convener:** Should the relevant committee and members look at strengthening that aspect of the legislation to ensure that the duty to contribute is fully understood and clear and that the mechanism for enforcing that contribution is stated in legislation? The last thing we want is to come back to this type of discussion in a few years when everybody has said that the intentions are good but there is no clarity about how the legislation is enforced.

**Douglas Sinclair:** That is a valid point. I do not see the point in putting duties in the bill unless there is a mechanism for ensuring that they are complied with.

**The Convener:** We can pass that on to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee.

**David Torrance:** Of the 32 CPPs across Scotland, six share the same boundaries as NHS boards. Has it been easier for them to progress their community plans and focus on local needs compared with the other 26 CPPs?

**Douglas Sinclair:** We have looked at one CPP that has a coterminous boundary. I do not think that it can be argued that coterminous boundaries of themselves make community planning easier. They should, in a sense, but I remember one chief executive pointing out to me that, because the boundaries were not coterminous in their case, they tried even harder to make the CPP work.

In Orkney—the one such place where we did an audit—we found that the performance that we would have expected because of the common boundary did not come up to expectations, largely because of a difficult relationship between the council and the health board. Caroline Gardner

has just given me a note to say that Borders is another example.

It is true of any of the partners that, if the relationship between the two leading players—the council and the health board—is not working, it is highly unlikely that the community planning partnership will work effectively.

**David Torrance:** On scrutiny, paragraph 5 of the report's summary says:

"At present, there is no coherent national framework for assessing the performance and pace of improvement of CPPs."

The local authorities are major players in the process, and many, such as Fife, have a scrutiny committee that looks at CPP performance and whether the authority is getting the best value for the budget. Are there not a lot of other authorities that do that and could report back on progress of the CPP?

**Douglas Sinclair:** You raise an interesting point about the potential for CPPs to develop their own scrutiny arrangements. I do not think that we got lots of evidence that there is a great deal of self-evaluation or self-criticism.

**Caroline Gardner:** What we found was at two levels for partnerships. David Torrance is right that for councils there is scrutiny in place, some of which works well and some less well. For the partnership that tends not to be the case across the piece. There is not enough of the partnership board challenging themselves and each other about how well they are doing against their aims. It is also quite hard to have external challenge in the way that there is good local government scrutiny with, for example, an opposition member chairing the scrutiny committee. It is hard to see how to get that external scrutiny into partnerships because of their nature.

We would like to see more of both those things: more challenge, and more external challenge, coming in to the process.

**Gil Paterson:** I want to go back to the integration of health and social care.

Health and social care are two really big beasts in terms of their budgets and responsibilities. In the whole life of this Parliament, and probably 20 years before that, we have been trying to cajole those two organisations to come together, and now we are having to use legislation to fully enforce integration in order to make an impact. We have yet to see whether that will prove successful. I have a feeling that it will—that is my own view—but we are having to do that in relation to those organisations, which are well resourced in terms of people and money, and difficulties occur.

On the positive side—and this is my real question—once the integration has taken place and boards and panels have been set up and some of the organisations that we are concerned about, including local authorities, are involved in the decisions that are made, is that likely to help the community planning process take place, or will it be entirely at odds with what we are trying to achieve?

**Caroline Gardner:** I think that we all recognise that integrating health and social care is essential and has been slow to happen in practice. There is a policy decision to be made about how we go about that. The Government, with parliamentary support, has decided to go for the integrated model using either integration joint boards or a lead agency model, and we are at the early stages of seeing that happen.

We have made submissions during the legislative process about the things that we think need to be in place in order to make that effective, based on our audit experience across Scotland. The statutory board is part of that, but a lot of other things will be needed as well, in terms of the accountability, resources, culture and all the things that we are seeing as challenges in community planning. It is early doors with regard to the way in which that will work in practice.

We will continue to consider the issue through our respective audit responsibilities as the integration comes into place over the next couple of years. At the same time, I think that getting community planning right could make a big contribution to that, ensuring that the information that the bodies are working with is right, that the wider picture of how health and social care sits in the area as a whole is right, and that people are pulling in the same direction instead of pulling in different directions.

Therefore, almost regardless of what happens with the integration agenda, getting community planning right can either help to make it more effective or get in the way, depending on how well it works.

**Gil Paterson:** My question was: is the fact that the two big beasts are starting to work together likely to enhance the ability of people to work together—or perhaps even almost force them to do so?

**Douglas Sinclair:** The key to councils and health boards making a success of health and social care partnerships will involve a change in the culture, in the sense of the health board and council members understanding that their loyalty is not to their organisation but to what is in the best interests of the health and social care partnership—just as the loyalty of a councillor who

is appointed to a police committee is to what is in the best interests of the police committee.

That change will take a bit of time to achieve, but I would have thought that, if councils and health boards can do that, it will put more pressure on community planning partnerships and will result in CPPs saying, "Well, if health and social care partnerships can make this work, we should be doing better ourselves."

**Gil Paterson:** My other question relates to the good practice that you mentioned. Is it possible to share that good practice by example? Is there a mechanism that the Government or COSLA can use to bring it to organisations that are not getting their act together? That is particularly important with regard to the statement in the report that

"Leadership at a national level is improving but many CPPs are not clear about what they are expected to achieve".

I would have thought that it might be useful for those CPPs to see good examples working in real time.

**Douglas Sinclair:** Absolutely. One of the points that we make about the future audit work that we might do is that we do not think that there will be a huge benefit in doing more big audits of community planning partnerships. We have done eight across a good swathe of various community planning partnerships—urban, rural and island—and we are not convinced that we would learn a great deal more from doing another 24.

To take your point on board, we think that along with partners we could do more to capture and disseminate good practice so that we get beyond the point at which people say, "If it wasn't invented here, I'm not prepared to do it." Good practice should be a good traveller in Scotland—at the moment, it is not.

Some CPPs exhibit good practice, but the issue is how we communicate that to other partners and encourage them not to reinvent the wheel but to take good practice on board. Your point is well made.

11:00

**Gil Paterson:** I want to tie my next two questions together. We have taken the bold step of introducing legislation to bring about collaboration between councils and health boards. Is it possible or practical for legislation to be used to force that to happen or is it too difficult?

**Douglas Sinclair:** The convener mentioned the fact that community planning has been on the statute books since 2003. There is provision in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 whereby a community planning partnership can apply to Scottish ministers to become an incorporated body. No community planning partnership has

ever applied to do so. That perhaps indicates that at the moment there is not the appetite out there for that; I do not know whether there will be in future.

I return to my point that, if we are in the business of public sector reform—as the Government states that it is—to create more statutory bodies goes against that flow.

**Mary Scanlon:** Mr Sinclair, you mentioned that the legislation on health and social care partnerships would not come into effect until 2016. We did not need that legislation. As a Highland representative, I know that NHS Highland and Highland Council have been merged since April 2012, so there are authorities out there that are in partnership.

**Douglas Sinclair:** Absolutely.

**Mary Scanlon:** It is worrying that there appears to be a lack of guidance on outcomes, as Tavish Scott said. We do not need to sit back and wait until 2016; the partnerships are happening.

**Douglas Sinclair:** That is a very fair point. A key part of that—this reflects a point that we make in our report—is the importance of building a relationship of trust between the council leader and the health board chair. Highland is a very good example of a case in which there was a strong relationship of trust and the decision was taken to embark on the lead agency model.

**Mary Scanlon:** We are visiting Inverness in February, so perhaps we will get the chance to ask questions about that then.

**Nigel Don:** Good morning. The report's focus is on management, and the questions that you have been asked so far have been about that. However, an issue that we always have when we manage something is having the ability to measure the outcomes. Usually, when that is in pounds, shillings and pence, we can find a way to do that, but if the measure of equalities in my community is something such as whether a child has gone to school having had breakfast before they got there, that is a different challenge.

From what you have seen so far, is the right information being measured in such a way that it could be put into an appropriate database, which could then be accessed by the right people and turned into meaningful information? If the basic data does not exist, we are not going to get anything out the other end.

**Caroline Gardner:** That is a good question. In some places, people are moving in the right direction. We talked about the fact that one of the confusions is about the extent to which community planning partnerships are about local needs and the extent to which they are about national priorities. As Douglas Sinclair said, they are about

both. A CPP needs to be clear which national priorities it is focusing on, and where and on which groups of people it is focusing locally. It also needs to be clear on what actions it intends to take to achieve those longer-term outcomes and how it will know whether it is moving in the right direction.

Providing breakfast for children in nursery or primary school might be an important contribution towards not only making Scotland a great place to grow up in, but having a healthy population and a healthy older population in a generation's time. It is necessary to measure whether the right children are getting breakfast, how regularly they are getting it and how that varies across classes in a school and across schools in an area. A CPP also needs to be clear what else it is doing to achieve those longer-term outcomes so that it can track that.

That can easily sound like a really techie, bean-countery thing to suggest, but we think that it is all about leadership and management. It is about saying that, if we want to ensure that the poorest children in an area are being decently fed at least once a day and are therefore set up to learn well at school, we need to ensure that we are taking action in every school and every classroom to make that happen.

The early years collaborative is doing well in getting some of that change happening in parts of Scotland. By linking that up with what is happening through community planning, we can help to spread good practice so that the people who are further behind learn from those who are doing well. This is all about focus and tying what is going on together rather than dissipating it.

**Nigel Don:** Thank you. I am beginning to realise why I asked the question in the way that I did. Going back about five years to the point when the Scottish Government introduced free school breakfasts and did a trial of that, I remember having a conversation that went along the lines of, "You really need to measure this." There are examples—Hull is one—where people have been doing that for a long time and they know how to get the right answers, but if we do not invest enough of projects in measurement, we will never know what happened. Five years ago, unfortunately, we did not do that, so we do not know what happened.

I return to the basic point that, if we do not invest the time, the effort and therefore the money in measuring what we really need to be able to assess—and, incidentally, we have to start with a baseline or we will never know whether it has changed—the best management in the world will still be guessing.

Clearly, it is not your responsibility, but do you see in your audit work local authorities in

particular, but also the other organisations that you work with, recognising the need to measure whatever it is and taking the steps to do that measurement?

**Caroline Gardner:** I completely agree with the point that you make. One thing that we often report to this committee is that that data is not being collected.

The answer is still "in parts". There are some places where that is being done really well and people recognise that, if they are to know that they are getting breakfasts to the right children regularly enough to make a difference, they have to record that and then act on what the information tells them. The same is true in relation to teeth cleaning and to hand washing in hospitals.

In the best places, we see planning going on in partnerships and charts on the wall so that people can see what is happening day by day. In other places, it does not get the attention that it deserves. People think that the techie stuff will happen by itself or that it is not important, and we do not see it.

We think that the Government, COSLA and the Improvement Service could help to spread good practice, building on what is already happening. That is why we believe that the national framework for assessing how community planning is doing is so important. We need to avoid reinventing the wheel once we have learned what works in one place.

**Nigel Don:** Okay. If I may, though, I will pursue the issue in a slightly different direction. I represent what is in many senses a rural community. At least 25 per cent of the folk do not live in a town. I think that you have already mentioned the issue, and it is certainly mentioned in the report—paragraph 45 refers to the assessment of areas of multiple deprivation, or multiple deprivation in general, and the extraordinary difficulty in measuring that in dispersed communities.

I feel that we have not yet solved that problem. We have identified it but, again, we are not going to be able to measure all the things that we have been talking about if we cannot get down, somehow or other, to understanding what is happening in this farmhouse or that set of cottages. We are left with the average across, say, north Angus, which ain't going to tell me anything that I could not previously have guessed.

Again, this is a methodological question, but do you see people beginning to get their minds around how they are going to crack that, given that we now at least understand that it is a problem?

**Caroline Gardner:** Antony Clark might want to comment in a moment. I think that people are

starting to do that in some places. Again, there is patchiness. You are absolutely right. Things such as the Scottish index of multiple deprivation are not as good as they need to be for populations as a whole in rural areas; they do not tell us enough because of the small numbers and the dispersed population.

The best community planning partnerships are using their real local knowledge. If we think about aspects of inequality and children who are going to struggle the most in life because of poverty and the other sorts of deprivation that they face, teachers, social workers and police officers tend to know who those families are.

You can get that really local knowledge into the community planning process, if you are doing it well, by working with localities that make sense, by tapping into both the data and people's experience, and by homing in on small enough areas so that you can get a feel for it. We are seeing that in some places, but it is not something that is happening as widely as it needs to across the piece.

**Douglas Sinclair:** It may be worth adding that the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers, COSLA and the Improvement Service are in the process of beginning to develop performance indicators for community planning partnerships, as they have done for local authorities, so that might help with measurement.

**Antony Clark:** As Caroline Gardner said, performance is patchy, but the best CPPs are measuring performance at whole-area level, within specific communities and among particular groups. They recognise that they need to gather and analyse data in lots of different ways, and we are also seeing a real awareness across Government of the need to make data more available at local level as well, because it is sometimes difficult for CPPs to bring together data from different sectors because it is captured and gathered in different ways and cannot always be brought together in sensible ways for planning purposes.

**The Convener:** It was useful that Nigel Don brought the whole debate back to the impact on ordinary people, including children, in communities throughout Scotland. Far too much of the debate takes place among bureaucrats and between politicians and bureaucrats, and it is in a language that no one can understand. It is passing the wider public by, and yet the significance of some community planning decisions is that they will fundamentally affect the way in which services are delivered to ordinary people the length and breadth of Scotland.

Something has got to give. We cannot go on with things as they are. We cannot have fine intentions that are not delivered because there is no means of delivering them. I apologise if, at times, our frustration seems to have been directed at the witnesses from Audit Scotland, who have provided a valuable service in bringing to us an analysis of what is—to be frank—failure across Scotland. Yes, there are one or two areas where there has been some success, but the overriding message is one of failure—failure to take responsibilities seriously, failure to implement and failure to deliver. There has to be some kind of change, and it is not Audit Scotland's job to come up with the decisions that will change things for the better, but we value the evidence that you provide that helps us to encourage the debate that we hope those with the power will listen to when they make decisions.

It seems that the whole public sector landscape in what is a very small country is extremely cluttered. A number of members have talked about the fact that some of the big organisations—which Gil Paterson referred to as the big beasts—are remote from local communities. David Torrance talked about boundaries and areas of responsibility not being coterminous, with the result that one body or the other is unable to engage properly. I wonder whether, in looking at the best use of public resources and public money, Audit Scotland might at some point look at the public sector landscape and ask whether it is too cluttered and whether there is waste and inefficiency.

I do not expect you to come up with a solution that says that there must be fewer organisations or that there should be mergers. That is for politicians to decide, but surely at some point we need to reflect on the fact that what is happening now is a bureaucratic nightmare that, in many respects, stems from inefficiency. Unfortunately, those inefficiencies are obscuring the excellent work that is often being done at local level throughout Scotland. Somebody needs to put on the table an analysis that will draw politicians of all parties up short and make them think differently about what is being done.

I will leave you with that thought. Thank you for what has turned out to be a stimulating discussion on a subject that is probably dry and obscure to most people.

11:15

*Meeting continued in private until 12:33.*



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