



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Committee for Justice

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

‘Policing and Community Safety  
Partnerships: A Review of Governance,  
Delivery and Outcomes’:  
Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland

21 January 2015

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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‘Policing and Community Safety Partnerships: A Review of Governance, Delivery and Outcomes’: Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland

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**Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**

Mr Alastair Ross (Chairperson)  
Mr Raymond McCartney (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Sammy Douglas  
Mr Tom Elliott  
Mr Paul Frew  
Mr Seán Lynch  
Mr Alban Maginness  
Mr Patsy McGlone

**Witnesses:**

Mr Stephen Dolan	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
Mr Brendan McGuigan	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
Mr William Priestley	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland

**The Chairperson (Mr Ross):** I welcome Brendan McGuigan, Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland, and inspectors William Priestley and Stephen Dolan. The session is being recorded by Hansard and will be available on the Committee website in due course. When you are ready, you can brief us on the key findings. Following that, I will open the floor to questions.

**Mr Brendan McGuigan (Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland):** Thank you very much indeed, Chair. I welcome you to your new role. I hope that we can have a mutually beneficial relationship, as I certainly did with your predecessor, vice-Chair and members of the Committee. We are here to help you with an independent assessment of the subject areas.

The report was published in December 2014. Policing and community safety partnerships (PCSPs) and district policing and community safety partnerships (DPCSPs) were established by the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. They replaced the separate district policing partnerships and community safety partnerships that had been in operation since 2002. Their primary role is to monitor police performance; work with local people to address local concerns in relation to community safety and policing issues; and develop effective responses to help tackle crime, fear of crime and antisocial behaviour. Each PCSP and district PCSP comprises political members drawn from the local district council, independent members who are appointed by the Northern Ireland Policing Board and representatives of a number of statutory bodies. They are designated as members of the partnership. Currently, there are 26 PCSPs and four district policing community safety partnerships, which have been established in north, south, east and west Belfast. Following the reorganisation of local government, there will be 11 PCSPs. That will take effect from April 2015.

Although PCSPs have delivered successful projects and events at a local level, the absence of reliable performance indicators limited the assessment of their overall impact. The cost of administration and delivery should be rebalanced in favour of the latter. Working relationships with community partners were more successful than those with statutory agencies, and police accountability meetings were most successful when operated in an open and transparent manner. Without a standardised framework to maximise partnership working among statutory, voluntary and community sector providers, it was inevitable that there would be inconsistency of practice across different council areas. Inspectors identified a need for PCSPs to be given guidance on how best to work with partners and how to measure change and improvement. The introduction of community planning offers an opportunity, albeit challenging, to align the aims of the statutory partners, local authorities and central government with those of the PCSPs. At the end of the current four-year cycle, the efficiency and viability of PCSPs should be reviewed against baseline performance measures.

We made two strategic recommendations. The first recommendation is lengthy, but it involves the overall relationship between the PCSPs and the local councils. From 2015, the local councils should provide the compliance and assurance framework for PCSPs; the community plan should be the focal point for delivery of the long-term aim of the PCSP; the action plans of the PCSP should feed into the community plan and alignment should be explicit; and the joint committee should retain oversight through the policing committee reports and regular reviews of the effectiveness of the PCSPs. The second recommendation relates to what really concerned us: the overall administrative costs. Following implementation of local government reform, the cost of administration should not exceed 20% of the budget allocated to PCSPs.

The report also made nine operational recommendations and identified a number of areas for improvement. We drilled down into those. As regards governance, the PCSPs are overseen by a joint committee of the Northern Ireland Policing Board and the community safety unit of the Department of Justice. The joint committee provides the general direction for the PCSPs and sets strategic objectives for the partnerships. In practice, the government structure of the PCSPs is tripartite, as they are supported and partly funded by the local councils, with council employees playing a major role in managing them. The governance arrangements focus heavily on compliance, but the partnerships would benefit from reduced compliance and more focus on delivery. There is scope for the councils to manage the compliance aspects of PCSPs, with the joint committee taking a more strategic role in setting standards for structure, resources and delivery. The cost of administration should be reduced. A rough benchmark against other public sector services agencies indicates around 20% of cost as an acceptable level. That would still provide over £1.1 million per annum for administration.

Monitoring police performance is a key aim of the PCSPs, although there was a high degree of variation in the nature and effectiveness of the policing committees. In certain areas, the meetings focused on formal presentation of police-recorded crime statistics and exchanges around low-level operational matters. The more successful meetings contributed to the development of policing plans and led to improvements in local policing. Generally, those meetings were less adversarial, the police reports were less corporate and the performance monitoring was not solely focused on individual transactions. Proposals that PCSPs should receive support through access-to-crime analysis and guidance on monitoring and challenging police performance should be supported.

Alongside the work of PCSPs, there was a range of central government strategies and voluntary and community organisations operating in the same space. Directly attributing a significant success to the PCSPs was difficult and begs two questions: are communities safer due to PCSPs? Would the same result occur in their absence?

Evaluation of individual projects and the work of PCSPs as a whole suffered from a lack of measurable indicators to signpost improvement. There is a need to develop a baseline measure against which projects can be assessed, and the achievements of individual projects need to be evaluated as a programme to achieve sustainable improvements.

There were obstacles to successful engagement of statutory agencies in delivering the aims of the partnership. The fusing of local needs with the higher-level aims of the statutory agencies needed a clear conduit to a decision-making level within the statutory body. With a community plan to focus outcomes and indicators to measure achievement across a reduced landscape of 11 PCSPs, the chance to strip back bureaucracy and reduce overheads and costs must be taken. The cost of administration and delivery must be rebalanced in favour of the front line.

The importance of community safety to underpin those achievements envisaged through community planning highlights the importance of PCSPs in assisting the newly formed local authorities to achieve their long-term aims.

We identified a number of challenges going forward. Community planning offers an opportunity, but statutory compulsion might be needed to ensure cooperation. It takes time to develop community plans. Transitional planning should focus on the current action plans, with the newly constituted PCSPs developing action plans to align with the councils' community plans. PCSPs should use their current action plans, updated as necessary, until the community planning process is working. Vesting responsibility in councils and council chief executives a single source of accountability and compliance will test the will of the joint committee, but it is essential for improved efficiency. The best management information used by some PCSPs should be rolled out to other areas. Roles of the partnership development officers, PCSP managers and chairs should be reviewed to maximise accountability, delivery and innovation. The role of the partnership development officers could be less around compliance and more around development, support and performance management. The chair should be held to account for delivery as much as the PCSP managers are. Accountability through improved annual reports, presentations by the chairs to the joint committee and feedback from communities should be developed and increased. Furthermore, the efficiency and viability of PCSPs must be assessed in four years and a decision made whether funding at current levels should continue. Should their functions be subsumed into councils? That is a question.

That is all I want to say at this stage.

**The Chairperson (Mr Ross):** Thanks for that. I have a couple of questions before I open it up. You mentioned the strategic aims to improve community safety by tackling crime and improving community confidence in policing. You talked about the difficulty in assessing that. How did you assess that? Who was responsible for assessing the performance of the PCSPs?

**Mr McGuigan:** A lot of it came from personal observation. The inspectors spent a great deal of time going round the various PCSPs, sitting in on their meetings, examining their reports and talking to both the community safety unit of the Department of Justice and the Policing Board to try to get a 360-degree view of the performance of individual PCSPs.

PCSPs are quite open in their reporting. So, while some information was available, there was not really enough to give you a sense that they were getting under the skin of the subject areas to the degree that we would have liked to have seen, and certainly not in every area. The performance in some areas was much better than others, but there was a real inconsistency across the piece.

**The Chairperson (Mr Ross):** What findings did you have about whether the public recognised that the PCSPs were there and operating? If the public did recognise that, what was their view of whether they were making any difference?

**Mr McGuigan:** I am happy to throw that to my colleagues.

**Mr Stephen Dolan (Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland):** Surveys were carried out, and overall public recognition was low and lower than you would have expected. In incidences in which people were aware of PCSPs, it would be fair to say that the surveyed results showed that people were not totally sure what they did.

**The Chairperson (Mr Ross):** When you say that it was lower than you expected, what were you expecting and what was the recognition level?

**Mr Dolan:** It was very low. In some areas, recognition of PCSPs was at 6% or 7%. Within the granularity of those results, people would not have been able to tell you the name of the chair of their local PCSP.

Another survey looked at communities' reporting to the PCSPs, and something like 6% or 7% of people said that they went to their PCSP with community safety issues. So, it was low in that respect. I talked to some community groups that were very aware of district policing partnerships (DPPs), and it had not really got across that the PCSPs had replaced the DPPs and the former community safety partnerships. One of the other issues, which was not so much anecdotal because I observed it myself, was that the branding of PCSPs was a little bit confused, in that the DOJ/PSNI aspect of it had equal importance in the branding as the PCSP bit.

**The Chairperson (Mr Ross):** You have given the impression that there is a real mixed bag and that there is some good stuff going on and some not so good stuff. You talked about the good example of helping to develop policing plans and being less adversarial. Can you give us an example of an area where that has been working well and some of the outcomes of the work that they have been engaged in?

**Mr Dolan:** To take another example of the use of good management information that led directly to achieving good outcomes, the Derry PCSP was notably successful in engaging the police with communities that had previously did not have that level of engagement. That was achieved in a couple of ways. They used meetings outwith the formal PCSP. So, rather than a fairly senior police officer like a chief inspector or superintendent coming and presenting facts and figures to the policing committee — that did happen — the operational and transactional stuff was carried out at local policing partnerships, where you are much more likely to find the local sergeant or an officer of that level dealing with community representatives, some of whom may have been independent members of PCSPs. However, it was not necessarily done in that formal process. That was quite successful.

In Newry, they accessed a software application that gave them a range of indicators. That was fed by a number of agencies and the sort of agencies that you would expect to be involved in community safety, such as the Fire and Rescue Service, the Ambulance Service and so on. The Housing Executive was also involved, as antisocial behaviour falls within its bailiwick at times. That was a very positive example. In Limavady, the relationship between the local policing commander and the PCSP was very evident. In Lisburn, community safety projects were carried out in the Old Warren estate and Colin, which were two projects on different sides of the divide. There was collaboration there through the PCSP, so you would hold those up as very positive examples.

**The Chairperson (Mr Ross):** Brendan, you posed the question of whether communities are safer with the existence of them. Would you care to answer that and perhaps give your assessment of how they have operated over the last four years and whether you believe that there is a case that they should be scrapped altogether?

**Mr McGuigan:** I must say, it was a difficult report to assess in that sense. The background information to support the success of the PCSPs was very limited, to be perfectly honest with you. If we are looking seriously at the current austerity measures, then any organisation that is costing £25 million over the next five years — if it was a Department I do not think that you would accept it. You would look for objectives, targets and effective performance management to show that it is actually delivering. Having said that, I equally know that in Northern Ireland the whole issue around the acceptability of policing is still relatively new. For the PSNI it is about forging new relationships. For some communities, it is about developing that relationship with the police, and, in that sense, political representatives and independent members can become an important conduit to assist in that relationship development.

It is one of those reports that is about a fine balance. We came down on the side of you having four years, and I think you should look very closely at the performance of the schemes. Then you need to make a very critical evaluation. Have they secured the sort of improvements and have they stepped up to the mark in their contribution towards community planning? A lot is expected of new councils. They are going to need a lot of help in developing that. It does have access. It does bring statutory partners together, maybe not just as effectively as we would like to have seen, but there is no statutory glue there. There is a designation, but, actually, we found that, while you might have the police commander arriving, you might only have an official from the Department of Health and Social Services or somebody from the Housing Executive with no real clout, no real commitment and very little opportunity to influence their local service delivery. There was a mismatch there, but we are where we are.

The community plan offers a real opportunity to try to provide some cohesion around public service delivery in district council areas. On the basis of that, we felt that there was an opportunity that cannot be missed, because it is costly. As it sat, it was spending far too much on administration. There was a real opportunity to reduce costs and show that they were more effective and had a greater contribution to make to local service delivery.

**Mr Frew:** I have sympathy for you, because you have had to report on something that I regard as nothing but an utter waste of public money and of my time. I declare an interest as being on the old-style DPP and also being a member of the PCSP. I think I have got that right. The point I make is that, whilst there is a very good calibre of personnel in those bodies, and the people who administer

them try their best, there is absolutely no reason why what was being administered in the PCSPs could not have been delivered within council. You could have a policing committee in the new councils, and you could have a committee on community planning. In my eyes, the DPP was much more structured and scrutinised the police more than the PCSPs, because the loyalties and the concentration of the PCSPs were divided. It meant that on many occasions, in a lot of places, the police were nearly let off the hook, in the nicest language. There was no drive and concentration there to develop the scrutinising of the police and really make a difference to plans. With the best will in the world, the police are far too busy to have taken the DPPs or the PCSPs with any real degree of seriousness. They come in, take their hit and they walk out again and get on with life. They will only worry about the next DPP or PCSP when they have to collate the figures. That is what I got out of the DPPs and the PCSPs. There is no reason why you cannot have a policing committee in a council.

What was very useful was the fact that you administered funding such as asset recovery or some sort of community safety funding vehicle. Some really good projects came out of that, but my point still stands: that could all have been delivered through the committee structure. You would not have a recruitment cost or a training cost.

You might say that there has to be a place for independent members, and I agree, but they could be invitees to a committee of a council. There is not one independent member whom I met who did not lose the will to breathe after a number of months of meetings. That is as damning a verdict as you can have on these bodies. I am, maybe, being too extreme, but I believe that I am being realistic in what I say. In my time, when I walked off a DPP, it was the biggest waste of my time and of public money. How would you respond to that? *[Laughter.]*

**Mr McGuigan:** I must say —

**Mr A Maginness:** He has given up the will to live after that.

**Mr McGuigan:** I must say it is not the first time I have heard that. We are going into a new era and there are significant challenges in the establishment of the new district council structures. I think that they are going to need all the help they can get in what is envisaged for them. The PCSPs, for all the ineffectiveness that you observed, still have linkages and connections that might take councils a considerable time to get up to speed with.

I have no doubt that after a period of time, if community planning works as effectively as it is envisaged, what you are talking about could well be the case. We have already said that the overall governance and accountability of the financial dealings of PCSPs could easily fall within the council structure. You do not need to be doing it two or three different times. Local government accounting processes are more than adequate to deal with this. There is duplication and triplication of effort on occasions, and there are efficiencies that can be made, but that is why one of the key recommendations around reducing the administrative costs will help focus minds on what they need to be doing.

**Mr McCartney:** I should declare an interest because I have a brother who serves on the PCSP in Derry. He seems to have done very well out of this, so I will sit on his laurels this afternoon. Looking at the administration costs, whose responsibility is it? Paul described some of the independent members losing the will to breathe, but they still remained on it. How do you create the situation where people who are not functioning are not allowed to function? The general observation I would make is that, in my opinion — I can only take it from the experience of the constituency, which is Derry — the nature of policing in Derry would have been different without the way that the DPP and the PCSP worked. The policing structures would have been different. That is possibly down to the structure, how people go at it and how the local police respond to it. If a local police commander has the attitude that we should suck it for an hour and see, it will never work. So, who is responsible for making sure that nobody goes into a meeting saying, "Suck it and see" and then goes outside and ignores what is costing all that money?

**Mr Dolan:** The administration costs were, in some ways, a legacy of combining the two previous structures — DPP and CSP — because two managers came together, maybe with a project support officer from the CSP. So, the PCSP may have ended up with a number of administrative staff, and, if you were starting from scratch, you might not have done that. The point was made that there was more guidance and more structure around DPP delivery and so on, and, in fairness, when the joint committee was setting up PCSPs, it thought that it would perhaps draw back a bit and leave it to get a bit more variety or a bit more local traction in terms of the development. I think that it would say,

looking back on that, that it should perhaps have delivered more guidance and put more structure round it. That would have led to issues about non-attendance of independents, explaining the role perhaps of the designated.

I will draw a parallel with another project, neighbourhood renewal, which was an attempt, at a wide level, to bring in statutory bodies and so on to deliver at local levels. Similar issues arose there. It is hard for members who are independents to attend a structured meeting and try to have an influence where there are experienced councillors who are used to that format. Statutory bodies come to the meetings. For example, the Housing Executive and education and library boards have a corporate business plan developed over years and very strong governance structures in terms of their delivery. In my view, it is wrong to expect a meeting around a table some Tuesday evening to change how they will deliver that corporate policy because they have had a bit of a chat amongst the councillors and independents. It will not work. I thought that expecting that was a flawed aspect of it. It goes back to Brendan's point about statutory glue and statutory compulsion that they must deliver. Community planning moves a little bit towards that, although central government does not have the statutory role.

The other aspect of administration costs is that you had 26 PCSPs. With 11 PCSPs, you would expect the administrative costs to fall in percentage terms. The other point about admin costs is that other moneys come in to PCSPs directly from councils and so on. If you add up all their funding, that will, in a way, reduce the percentage of admin costs. I did not have access to that information when I did the report, but, over time, I think that the cost will automatically fall below the level that we quoted. I do not know if it will get to 20%, but it will definitely fall very quickly. That might go some way towards assuaging that concern.

**Mr McCartney:** In Larne, 100% of its money was spent on admin. Should someone have stepped in earlier and said, "What are you doing?"

**Mr Dolan:** It is a special case unfortunately. I am sure that the Department officials will be able to fill you in on all that. There were issues in Larne that, to be honest, meant that it was not receiving any other funding and that the projects were under scrutiny and so on. So, there was an issue up there. That was a problem.

**Mr McCartney:** I ask this in ignorance: was the community wardens scheme limited to the places that got the money? I cannot understand why other places would not use what is obviously a very good scheme on the ground.

**Mr Dolan:** There was an application process for funding from the Department for the community safety wardens. I think that it was then reviewed, and so certain funding was reduced. I am not sure if community safety wardens funding is available now or going forward.

**Mr McGlone:** My apologies; I was not in for the early part of the presentation today. I was pulled out on other business.

I was the first chair of Cookstown DPP, and one of the things that I notice is that, if you were to go out on the street now where I come from and ask, "What is the PCSP?", most people would draw a blank. It has no public profile whatever in the local papers. I analyse the local papers every week, as anyone who has an interest in their community should. No profile. Zilch. That is the first thing. Connectivity with the local community is zero unless they put out mail shots and the likes.

Thank you for raising the other issue; it is one that has been tackled finally. The DPPs got the hits occasionally. They had the public meetings and the outreach meetings and that sort of thing, and they got bits and pieces in the local newspapers. There was not a lot, but it happened occasionally, and people were aware of it, although not everybody was. Public awareness seems to have gone downhill. If the public awareness has gone downhill, its effectiveness will likewise go downhill. It runs the risk of getting sucked into exactly what it should not be, which is a purely administrative body where people shuffle paper around the place and that is it.

That brings me on to community planning. Thanks for raising it. One thing that all of us hate is having to go to a couple of meetings where exactly the same things are being done, usually with the same people. The only thing that changes is the venue. Sometimes even the venue does not change. With the advent of community planning, a lot of the issues and discourse that will have been going on at a PCSP will inevitably crop up at community planning meetings. I think that there is going to have to be

a lot of harmonisation. I also understand why some people would lose the will to breathe at some of these meetings.

Raymond referred to a case. I think that a lot of it has to do with the individual senior police officers and other officials for an area. It works if they have a drive to make it work, rather than if they merely come in, take it on the chin and walk out the door. I have seen senior police officers who were committed to making it work. If anything happened in the locality, they were immediately on to the chair of their DPP or whatever it might be, and they were deeply committed to the process of public accountability. From a management point of view, that is something in the police and other bodies that has to be looked at.

To come back to your point about the issues on the likes of the Housing Executive or the Roads Service coming along with their corporate drive and the like, let me say that the consultation has already taken place with the locally elected public body, which is the council. They present their plans to the council, and the councillors sit there and make their contribution. We have all been there. That then is their consultation exercise done. You are hardly going to come back in and do it all over again at a corporate level, where it does kick in. The Housing Executive and other bodies have a response adaptation to whatever issues might be in the area, such as the antisocial behaviours that come up time and time again, drug issues or alley-gating. Those issues are run-of-the-mill, but they are very important, as is how the public body responds to them in a given area, depending on what they hear in the meeting.

Those are a few observations from my point of view. One point that was very telling was the analysis of the Belfast PCSP. In the survey, people were asked who they normally contact for policing and community safety concerns. Only 5.3% of respondents said that they contacted the PCSP. When asked whether they understood the role and functions of the PCSP, 53.9% said no. That is after all the selling and the glossy brochures that were put into the community. It is obviously not being seen in the communities as the major factor that it is supposed to be.

**Mr Dolan:** I want to pick up on your point about the interaction at what you would call the tactical or operational level of statutory bodies. There have been some good examples of that, as you alluded to, after the corporate plan has been set. I went to a meeting in Carrickfergus, where there was a discussion about drop-in centres relating to drug abuse and so on. It was quite well attended in the context of PCSPs; there were 50 or 60 people there. It brought officials from the health board who certainly would have been involved at that high-level planning. It was interesting for them to experience the feedback at a lower level. I do not know how much of a difference it has made. That is one of our issues about measuring impact. However, it gave the opportunity for those people to be quizzed by the public or to face public concerns. Rolling it all up into a council committee may mean that the focus on it is lost among all the rest of the council business. That has to be weighed up when deciding whether PCSPs as a separate entity add value.

**Mr McGlone:** Would you take the point about the police and how senior officers approach the accountability or otherwise of the body that they are dealing with and how they respond and adapt and come back to the communities about that? The most basic PR in the police and getting back to people has been incredibly bad in some areas. That applies to other statutory agencies. I am sure that there is not an elected representative in this room who has not encountered the really good, effective and efficient examples of that. It may only take someone to pick up the phone and say, "We are working on that. We will get back to you". Likewise, with those PCSPs and other bodies, be it the Housing Executive, health trust or whatever, their response in getting back and the effectiveness or otherwise of that can depend a lot — almost entirely in some instances — on the senior official. Usually, when there is no response or a mediocre or awful response, it goes back to the elected representatives, and a special council meeting or an Assembly Committee is called to hold them to account.

**Mr Dolan:** Direct observations and quotations were made to me and Bill saying that, where the police responded quickly, the whole PCSP was seen in a more positive light. It comes down to what priority is given in the organisation to the relationship with the PCSP. The inconsistency that we found was very much personality driven. A housing manager executive in one PCSP area will be lauded for their input and so on, and, in another area, they are invisible. It is up to the statutory body to have some form of priority in engagement with the PCSP, and it is up to the PCSP to say, "This is how we measure our performance". That was not happening.

**Mr William Priestley (Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland):** One of the issues that was impacting it was that relationship, and that is very much vested in personalities. It is also vested in how the PCSP went about its business, and, where PCSPs moved beyond a dynamic of holding to account but were actually monitoring performance, it seemed to work better. You may say that there is not much difference in that. There is not, but, from the police point of view, when they felt that they were being monitored for their performance rather than held to account, the relationship was much stronger and was more of an adult-to-adult transactional relationship.

**Mr McGlone:** Could you explain to me how being held to account and monitored operates in practice?

**Mr Priestley:** It is all to do with the dynamic.

**Mr McGlone:** You are dealing with the same person, and, if the person who is being held to account or monitored is being ineffective, you can go to the next rung or two up and bring the senior officer down.

**Mr Priestley:** It worked better when it was about monitoring performance. It was an adult-to-adult discussion rather than someone being berated for poor performance and then walking out and saying, "I took that hit, and now I am out of that meeting". Where the meeting was focused on performance and then on sustained performance into the future, whereby you bring someone back to describe their performance after the meeting, that dynamic worked better in the successful PCSPs. So, rather than berate someone for their performance after which they walk out the door and think, "That is fine. It is over", there was a dynamic that meant that they came back.

**Mr McGlone:** Thank you for that. Again, you are back to management and administrative issues that are internal to the PCSP. The major issue, be it on good performance or bad performance, is stats coming up well, with the result that you bring people back in again. That is not being communicated outward to the community. There is no connectivity with the community. Mind you, for £25 million, you would expect a whole lot.

**Mr Dolan:** The channels of communication are there. They just need to be exploited. In the areas for improvement in the report, we touch on extending their influence and being clearer about what to do. Bill touched on a topic that we discussed, which we describe, not in the report but internally, as transactional accountability. So, the police inspector turns up with a plethora of stats and flicks through them. They may be on KSIs and drug seizures. I attended one meeting where he said, "Drug seizures are down. We did not meet our target, but that could be a good thing. It might either mean that there are fewer drugs, but maybe that we are not catching them as quickly as we should". Running through those stats perhaps gives a bit of comfort to the police, but it is not monitoring performance. It may be some form of accountability. When you went to some of the other areas where the police committee was looking at community safety being delivered in conjunction with the police, you got a better feel.

So, instead of all the statistics, they were able to talk anecdotally about activities that were taking place. Some of those were explained away by the police, who may have said that it is not actually a criminal offence to stand at the corner of the street, for example. There was just a better dynamic. It is hard to explain, but it is not just about punching out the numbers, delivering the report and walking out the door saying, "Right, we got away with that for another three months", which we did with some things.

**Mr McGuigan:** There is something very important I need to say here. Some of the PCSP managers were exceptional, and were it not for their efforts and interventions, I think that the overall PCSPs would have floundered. There are some people who get this and understand it and who are labouring under an impression of the way that the DPPs functioned in the past and the way that the community safety partnerships had focused in the past. I think that there is an opportunity there. I keep going back to it. We are expecting a lot from our councils, and there is an opportunity for them to step up to the mark here. I think that these PCSP managers could become extremely influential in helping chief executives of councils to consider how elements of the community plan can be developed. They have been doing some of that work, but there just has not been the energy to activate some of it.

As I say, you have to be fair to some of those individuals who have ground on over the years and tried to do the best that they could. They certainly are out there, and I hope the new council chief executives will be making a beeline for those people to see how they can start to activate some of their knowledge and experience to support community planning in the new council areas.

**Mr Lynch:** As someone who has been there before as a member of one of the old DPPs, I have seen some of the difficulties and the teething problems and, as Stephen said, the stats. Those nearly killed the meetings, and people did not want to go back to them. I agree to some extent with Paul, but I saw the reasons for them. They played a good role in the initial stage of building confidence in communities that did not have any engagement with policing. Brendan, you said that the community plan will be central to success and that it will operate in an open and transparent manner. Can you give an example of that?

**Mr McGuigan:** That is about observing during the meeting that everything was out in the open and that there were free discussions on police performance as opposed to a PowerPoint presentation or a raft of statistical data that are very difficult to interrogate and analyse. There is nothing better for public-service deliverers to say than, "We are not doing enough in this area", so when people were upfront and said that they needed to do better, that reflects a kind of openness or transparency. Indeed, if there was a significant issue, they may acknowledge it as such and are not blind to the fact that the performance of their organisation could have been better. That is the kind of openness and transparency that public representatives welcome, as opposed to the actions of people who close up, hunch down, draw themselves in and are less than open in responding to concerns that public representatives and, indeed, independent members might have about police performance.

**Mr Lynch:** The other difficulty that I found was that the community police officers in the areas were continually changing.

**Mr McGuigan:** When it comes to the relationship with the police, it is vital that citizens have confidence that they can develop a relationship with individual police officers. That is what it comes down to. The issue of talking to the area commander or the new district commanders is something quite separate. If you are talking about building police legitimacy, you will find that one of the most important elements of it is that the citizen has the ability to engage directly with police officers or that public representatives can speak to the local sergeant or inspector about issues. It does not always need to be drawn up into a situation where an issue has to be talked about at the PCSP meeting. That is turning local into parochial. That is not effective for police leadership either. You have to give them their place and acknowledge that individual officers have their responsibility. You do not want to undermine that relationship between individual police officers and the citizen.

**The Chairperson (Mr Ross):** In my area, there is a turnover of police officers. That makes it so much more difficult, especially when, if you or the community get to know one, they go somewhere else.

**Mr Dolan:** The individual officer is one aspect. There are two comparators of good and bad practice. In one, the PCSP meeting is held almost like this, with the microphones, the whole show and the big council chamber, being very formal. I attended one of those meetings, sat by myself and found it very difficult to get a discourse going because I had to be presented. That led to a formal relationship.

The other is at the project level, where you are engaging with the police. You have examples of the engagement process bringing a local policeman to the local grammar school to talk to the children. That was OK, but much more successful was a couple of community police officers engaging in much-harder-to-reach communities in a project with kids who had convictions and things like that. That had a much greater impact. So, there is an element of conducting the business in a manner that goes beyond some of the boundaries that maybe we are used to in committee and so on.

**Mr McCartney:** You could ask someone in Donegal, "Who would you normally contact on policing and community safety issues?", and you could ask the same question of someone somewhere in England. There could be a response rate of 29% saying that they ask their local councillor. That seems to me to be relatively high, and I think that that is one of the successes of this. Why would people see their local councillor?

When people phone our office about a matter with the PSNI, they find that there are people who specialise in that. They are usually our people who were on the former DPPs or PCSPs. Sometimes your statistics can be masked.

If somebody in Donegal had an issue about policing, they would phone the guards. They would never say they would contact their local councillor. That is because of the relationship.

**Mr Dolan:** The worrying figure in there is that 9% said they would contact others, without defining who "others" were.

**Mr McCartney:** Yes. I say this flippantly, but only 3% said they knew who their local members were. I would say they all know where they live, because when they need them, they seem to be able to find them. *[Laughter.]* They might not know their names or exact titles, but they certainly can find you when they need you.

**Mr McGlone:** Maybe not as a PCSP member.

**Mr McCartney:** But they know you will take them to a local station.

**Mr A Maginness:** You are suggesting there should not be district partnerships for Belfast. That probably is the best approach. Clearly, they are not working in that district sense.

**Mr Dolan:** There was an issue about the role of the principal partnership and the district partnerships. From a common-sense and governance point of view, we said that the principal ones set strategic direction and develop themes, and then the districts deliver and interpret those themes for a local area. That was not happening.

The districts were totally independent, taking different approaches, and there was not a great deal of shared practice. There were issues in the principal, because a lot of people there who I talked to said they were not sure what to do. On the districts, for instance, south district said to me, "We've got responsibility for Belfast city centre, but nobody has told us why". That seemed to have evolved. West Belfast had a very different approach from east Belfast, and north Belfast had a different approach again. Some of those worked, but the issue was how to share a practice when they are legally constituted as totally independent bodies. That struck me as not being the way to go.

The other issue was the scale of funding, certainly when you compared Belfast, as it was, with somewhere like Magherafelt or Limavady. With the new 11, however, the disparity is not so great in area and population and even in the money.

**Mr A Maginness:** Do you have any estimate of what we would save by reducing to 11?

**Mr McGuigan:** You are looking at an average of administrative costs. It would be somewhere in the region of 43%. If you went down to 20%, you would be talking about a sizeable amount of money. We are saying that, if the Assembly decides, through the Department of Justice, that that is the way that it wants to fund this, that is fine, but you would want to ensure that the majority of that funding was being directed to the front line and that it was not being soaked up in administrative costs.

As Stephen pointed out to me, 20% is quite generous. In some voluntary organisations, you would be talking about it being down to around 12%. So, it is really important.

**Mr A Maginness:** I concur with the analysis, but I do not reach the conclusion that we should get rid of PCSPs. I think that the potential is there. I do not think that they have reached their potential. I think that we have to look at them afresh and revamp them. Paul talked about some of the ideas. PCSPs are attached to councils, but they are not of the council. Greater integration and greater partnership with the council might be a better approach. I just say that by way of comment; I do not expect you to comment on it.

One thing that I found absent from the report was the police's voice. I did not think that the police's voice was coming through, but maybe I am wrong. Maybe this is simply an objective outsider's look and was not necessarily intended to reflect the police's views.

**Mr Dolan:** We spoke to them.

**Mr McGuigan:** We spoke to them, absolutely, and, once again, their experience was extremely mixed. They would have questioned the value of the PCSPs. Having said that, the PCSPs' formation was part of the police reform programme. It was about developing acceptability and in many ways mirroring what had happened in other jurisdictions with the Crime and Disorder Act in the mid-90s in England and Wales. Once again, there was a statutory framework around that, and the councils generally took it on board, but councils in England and Wales had experience of managing a whole range of services, including education, social care and planning. Indeed, they had a relationship with the police service, which was, once again, quite mature and less confrontational.

In many ways, it was built into the Patten report as a mechanism for engaging local representatives and citizens in a joint enterprise. It floundered a bit, and I think it had gone stale under the old DPPs and community safety partnerships. People were not turning out to support them. There was not the energy around it. The police did not feel that they had the mechanism to move things forward. In many ways, there was inertia around some of it, and my concern with the launch of the PCSPs was that they adopted some of the former structures' bad habits. That was the time that they needed new direction.

When I read the report and spoke to a lot of people about it, I found that it was in the balance. Equally, in looking ahead, we could see the challenges of community planning, and we know that, to deliver effectively on community planning, councils will need as much support as they can get to deliver on this.

**Mr A Maginness:** Just one final point, Chair. If I were a police commander or a senior police manager in an area, I think that, even though the PCSPs do not seem to be working, at least they provide a framework and a discipline to the local community in the sense that you have to report to the local community what you are doing. I think that that discipline informs the way that police should work. I think that is an important aspect of the whole thing that we should never overlook.

**Mr McGuigan:** Absolutely.

**Mr Dolan:** It is a good point. The unwritten bit in the report is, as I say, where you have come from. We look at PCSPs now in isolation, and you mentioned the police voice. The very fact that the police are there and that there is an accountability mechanism needs to be developed, but that is an improvement on what was there before. That interaction between communities and the police was not there for many years. From that point of view you could say that the concept is right but that we need to look at its structure and administration.

**Mr Douglas:** Thank you for your presentation. Your report refers to the special arrangements for Belfast, which I would like to concentrate on. You talk about the interviews that you had with the members of the respective bodies. You are quite scathing. I read that there is:

*"no evidence of accountability, monitoring or performance assessment."*

It is quite clear that you had major difficulties with Belfast. Your recommendation is that there should be one PCSP for each council area, including Belfast, which means that there is no need for DPCSPs. How did you arrive at that conclusion? Obviously, you did an analysis, but did that include your discussions with those respective members who also felt that there was no need for them?

**Mr McGuigan:** That was certainly reflected back to us. A number of the independent members in particular just felt that it was not working. We preferred to think that there are Belfast-wide issues; it is not subject to one particular area. Issues around race hate, domestic violence, sexual violence or antisocial behaviour cross over any subdivision of Belfast city. When you look at it now in the context of the structure of 11 district councils, you can see that Belfast is no bigger than some of the newly amalgamated council areas. It has the same population. It is now one police district, not four. It had been two, and now it is down to one single police district. It just makes more sense that the subdivisions of the existing PCSPs were most effective when they picked a theme. So, if there was a subgroup of the PCSP that wanted to focus on sexual violence or domestic violence, that was found to be a really powerful tool. It brought in the experience from different parts of the city or district council area around a themed issue, focusing on what the district policing partnership could do to improve the situation. We found that that approach was much more successful, as opposed to what one area might do differently from another. It is not a competition. It is actually about ensuring that there is a consistency of policing delivery right across Northern Ireland.

**Mr Douglas:** Do you feel strongly that the operational regulation is 100%? Have you not had any second thoughts on it?

**Mr McGuigan:** None at all.

**Mr Dolan:** One point to be made is that, where you have amalgamated council areas, for instance, people expressed to us that they felt that they would lose out because we had brought in the urban area of Coleraine. That was expressed especially in the north-west, where the council stretches from

Ballycastle right across to the side of Limavady, and by people in rural areas. Their first thoughts were that we would have a subcommittee called the Limavady part of the new PCSP. We counselled against that and said that they would end up so isolated because the level of representation that they would have on that would be so small. It is much better to focus on the themes, and you can then evolve. You could have a sexual violence or domestic violence-themed project, and you could then roll forward and go into drugs and antisocial behaviour, whereas, if you set up the little geographically based groups, they just become mired in their own parochial issues and do not benefit. We saw that with a drugs scheme put forward by one of the Belfast district policing partnerships. It ended up being picked up by Antrim, Newtownabbey and so on. That was an evolutionary, osmotic process rather than a strategic driver. So we are worried about little subgroups forming all over the place, because you definitely will lose the best practice aspect, and that is behind our Belfast thinking as well.

**The Chairperson (Mr Ross):** OK. Thank you very much for your time.