



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Justice

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Safer Communities Directorate:
Department of Justice

11 April 2024

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Ms Joanne Bunting (Chairperson)
Miss Deirdre Hargey (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Doug Beattie
Mr Maurice Bradley
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Alex Easton
Mrs Sinéad Ennis
Mrs Ciara Ferguson
Mr Justin McNulty

Witnesses:

Ms Lynne Curran	Department of Justice
Mr Mark Goodfellow	Department of Justice
Mr Michael McAvoy	Department of Justice
Ms Katie Taylor	Department of Justice
Mr Graham Walker	Department of Justice

The Chairperson (Ms Bunting): I apologise that we have kept you waiting for the length of time that we have. That is unusual, but you will appreciate that we had some other issues to work through. I apologise for our tardiness in that regard.

We have with us Mark Goodfellow, director of the safer communities directorate; Lynne Curran, head of policing, strategy and engagement; Katie Taylor, head of the protection and organised crime division; Michael McAvoy, head of the community safety division; and Graham Walker, head of the international criminal justice cooperation unit. By the time I have got through that, that is another five minutes away. *[Laughter.]* Folks, you can give us your briefing, and then we will move into questions. I have asked members to avoid commentary, to go straight to questions and to prioritise so that we try to make up some time. I apologise for keeping you.

Mr Mark Goodfellow (Department of Justice): No problem. Thank you very much, Chair. It is great to be here, back in Room 30 in full use again. Thank you for the opportunity to brief the Committee. I appreciate very much the pressures on your time. From our perspective, we are really keen that today is the start of a process of engagement rather than a single event. I will dispense with the introductions, Chair, because you have helpfully done those for me. I will move on to the main briefing. We sent you a very short briefing paper, so, over the next few minutes, I hope to set some context and add some colour to that for members.

On the remit, structure and size of the safer communities directorate, our responsibility extends to the resourcing, policy and legislative framework for policing and community safety across Northern Ireland. I also lead on security-related issues across the Executive. We have about 300 staff in the directorate, and that is across the three divisions that are represented with me today and also an Executive agency, namely Forensic Science NI, on which we will be very happy to arrange a separate briefing for the Committee. We are responsible for the governance and the sponsorship of state pathology and a range of arm's-length bodies (ALBs) across the justice sector. We host, for administrative purposes, the Executive programme for tackling paramilitarism and organised crime, on which, I understand, you have a separate briefing scheduled.

My directorate has a resource budget of around £20 million, but a programme budget of more than £800 million when we add all the ALBs into the mix. Specifically on budgets, I am conscious that you have already heard from the permanent secretary and other directorate colleagues on the challenges of continuing to deliver for the justice sector. I do not intend to repeat too many of those messages. Suffice to say that, going into next year, the pressures for DOJ sit at just under half a billion pounds, £374 million of which sits within my directorate. The vast majority of that sits within the PSNI, as you might expect.

We are a demand-led service, which severely limits our ability to generate savings and easements. I cannot control the demands on police time and the requisite resourcing demands that those place upon the PSNI any more than I can control the number of victims of modern slavery and human trafficking. It is very much a demand-led directorate in that sense.

At a community level, how could I potentially save money? In theory, I could stop things like funding the Probation Board's delivery of enhanced combination orders (ECOs), but, to me, that would clearly be a false economy because it would not generate savings. All that it would do would be to displace costs to other parts of the justice system and add to the number of short-term prison sentences. I know that you heard from the director general of the Prison Service about the pressures on the system there as well. Likewise, our directorate is responsible for electronic monitoring, so, in theory, I could stop the contract for the provision of electronic monitoring, but, then, we would be starting to reduce the public protection arrangements and confidence therein and removing a tool from the judiciary. We would simply be displacing the costs and pressures, because other parts of the system would need to pick that up. There are a lot of things across the directorate that we simply cannot afford to not do.

The written briefing that we provided in advance sets out an overview of the divisions represented here today. We will not go through it, but drawing out the span of control and responsibility that we have across the directorate is worthwhile. We carry an absolutely fascinating and privileged mix of roles, covering sponsorship, legislation, operational delivery and a lot of public-facing roles.

I have previously used the phrase, as have senior PSNI colleagues, that policing is way too important to leave it to the police. I do not mean that to be critical of the police in any sense; I mean that every aspect of society has a clear responsibility to support the PSNI in keeping communities safe. Exactly the same principle applies across the directorate. I cannot keep communities safe, and neither can my colleagues, without working collaboratively within, across and beyond the justice system. That collaboration is critical for us in order to build safer and more resilient communities.

Quite often, as members will be aware, those who come into contact with the justice system do so because of socio-economic challenges upstream, whether those are health inequalities, educational underachievement, mental health issues, relationship breakdown or housing issues. All those issues are socio-economic; they are not justice issues, but they very quickly manifest as justice issues, as you will be aware. Therefore, in respect of crime, antisocial behaviour and the fear of crime, that is where we need to focus our efforts.

Contentious bonfires are another example of an issue for which we do not hold ultimate responsibility but where we lean in quite heavily because it will become a justice issue. We are coming towards that time of the year again. From a DOJ perspective, we are not a landowner nor are we responsible for contentious bonfires, but, when community tensions start to rise and escalate into antisocial behaviour and/or public disorder, it quickly becomes a justice issue. We are very clear that we are part of a group, and we play our part under the memorandum of understanding with other Departments to try to get ahead of issues like that upstream and to mitigate the risks around those issues.

The good news, bearing in mind our title as the safer communities directorate, is that Northern Ireland is a relatively safe place in which to live, work and socialise. The level of recorded crime in Northern Ireland is significantly below that in England and Wales. The latest figures show that we have 56

recorded crimes per 1,000 of the population relative to 94 in England and Wales. That is not to be complacent in any shape, sense or form. Clearly, one crime is one crime too many, but, in relative terms, Northern Ireland is a very safe place in which to live, work and socialise. Of course, you will be aware of the recent reduction in the threat level from severe to substantial, which is also welcome news.

From my perspective, I am very proud of the multi-agency approach that the directorate takes across the span of our remit, be that planning for parades and bonfires with TEO, DFI, DFC, the police, the Education Authority and others; working ever closer with the Department of Health on the health and justice interface, which we need to get even better at, around mental health and the prevalence of mental health issues in the criminal justice system; or working collectively with DOH on implementing coroners' inquest reports. We also work collaboratively, as colleagues will be aware, with the policing and community safety partnerships (PCSPs), which include independent members and elected members from a range of designated organisations. Collaboration and multi-agency working are, therefore, at the heart of everything we do.

Other organisations that we work with as we support victims of trafficking and exploitation include Women's Aid, Migrant Help and the health and social care trusts. We work with the Home Office and the Security Industry Authority (SIA) on licensing arrangements for security personnel. We also work with important voluntary groups, such as search and rescue groups, that give up their time in the pursuit of helping others.

We attempt to divert people away from crime, upstream, but we are realistic enough to recognise that that is not always possible. We are, therefore, also responsible for managing the public protection arrangements across Northern Ireland, working closely with operational partners to manage offenders in the community. When they fail to adhere to their conditions, we recall them to custody in the pursuit of keeping people safe.

The directorate plays a critical role in working collaboratively across Northern Ireland to build safer, resilient communities, but we have also established a footprint, on a cross-border and wider international basis, in areas like community safety structures, forensic science, organised crime and cross-border policing. The Northern Ireland justice system continues to attract an awful lot of interest from the EU and beyond. We completed, with a mandate from the Minister before she left office last time around, a series of engagements in Brussels and Washington to map out that social model of justice, the evolution of justice since devolution and the evolution of the community policing model. We did that not in splendid isolation but with our colleagues in the PSNI, the Youth Justice Agency, the Probation Board and colleagues from the Executive programme for tackling paramilitarism and organised crime.

While we have always enjoyed really strong relationships with the UK and the Irish permanent representation in Brussels, that programme of visits generated a significant number of inward international visits. We get a lot of visitors from justice systems across and beyond the EU who want to learn from good practice here. We have a confident system now whereby we no longer hide behind the curtains and look for best practice elsewhere. We are absolutely open to that, but, often, when we travel to look at good practice elsewhere, we come away with an affirmation that our justice system is in a fairly good place. That affirmation is incredibly important.

Chair, I am conscious that I am now in danger of straying beyond my commitment to keep my opening comments brief, so I will stop there. I am conscious of your time constraints. I am very happy, obviously, to take questions.

The Chairperson (Ms Bunting): Thank you very much. Usually, I do not go first, but, in this circumstance, I will. I did not ask the Attorney General any questions, so I am sure that members will indulge me.

In your briefing paper, on the protection and organised crime division, under current key issues, you state:

"An Addendum Work Plan to the Organised Crime strategy is being prepared for 2024/25, alongside a consideration of the strategic approach to organised crime for its next iteration."

I am happy to get this in writing; you do not need to answer it now. I would be grateful to know when that will be ready and to what extent the strategy has informed the Minister's proposed legislation on organised crime that she is looking at for her next Bill. Can you respond to me on that in writing?

Mr Goodfellow: Sure.

The Chairperson (Ms Bunting): On page 63 of members' packs — I am not sure which page it is for you — the policing and community safety partnerships are mentioned. You will be aware of my previous tenure on the Policing Board. I am not sure that we always get bang for our buck from PCSPs to the extent that we could do. I appreciate that there is a tripartite arrangement, and I am clear on the boundaries within the Policing Board, but it would be useful to know whether conversations are ongoing about what could be done to help improve PCSPs or review them just to make sure that everything is as it should be and that we are maximising the potential of those bodies.

On the next page of your briefing, you refer to challenges relating to multi-agency risk arrangements (MARA) and to public protection arrangements in Northern Ireland for managing the risk posed by the most serious sexual and violent offenders. It would be helpful for us to have some understanding of what the challenges are.

Finally, on human trafficking and the national referral mechanism (NRM), I appreciate that your briefing says that the figures, which are in the 400s and 500s, are significant, but, with regard to trafficking and child sexual exploitation, it has become apparent from questions to the Chief Constable and other research that we are merely scratching the surface and that, while those numbers seem significant, compared with the number of people who are at risk and in the throes of being trafficked or who are being used for slavery and sexual exploitation, they are not. What is being done to put us in a position in which our figures are more accurate and more people who are at risk are identified?

What is being done to ensure that society at large recognises the signs and can report them? When constituents have come to me with reports of what they consider to be questionable activity in homes in their area — people paying for sex; exploitation of women and young girls — it is very difficult to get action to be taken. That is a question for the PSNI, but the issue is educating people and building confidence in them to report and that, in doing so, they will be taken seriously. People who are trafficked and exploited in that way are not living but existing, and we have an obligation to do as much as we can. Those are my questions.

Mr Goodfellow: Thank you. They are very good questions. On the first one, on PCSPs and bang for your buck, I absolutely take the point. From within the Department, we see a spectrum of performance across PCSPs. We probably see more explicitly bang for your buck than others. An awful lot goes unseen, which takes me back to your last point about awareness of modern slavery and human trafficking. There is probably a job of work for us in asking whether we are maximising awareness of PCSPs and the role that they can play in supporting local communities. A lot of the stuff that they have done, such as on community safety wardens in areas like Derry/Londonderry, on linking with other agencies and on multi-agency support hubs that are starting to identify the most vulnerable people, is critical. Not everyone would associate that with the work of PCSPs, but we will have an opportunity to address that, given that the most recent Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) report recommended the development of a new community safety strategy. PCSPs are a key local delivery mechanism, and their role and the bang for your buck — value for money — that we get from them will have to be part of our consideration. I assure you that we absolutely will wrap up that point in the development of a community safety strategy.

On your second point, about challenges relating to MARA, the Committee will be aware of the huge complexity and sensitivity of some of those areas. In anticipation that that would come up, we planned to suggest that the Committee might find it helpful to have a separate, closed session on MARA so that we can get into some of the detail.

The Chairperson (Ms Bunting): Do members agree?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Ms Bunting): That would be lovely. We will hold my question until we receive that briefing. Thanks, Mark. That will save us a bit more time; that is great.

Mr Goodfellow: I completely agree with you that modern slavery and human trafficking are heinous crimes. We want to be clear about that and to build people's confidence to report them. I hope that those figures are accurate, for now. As always, however, it is probably a hugely under-reported issue, and we need to do more around it.

The team has developed a three-year strategy, which has gone to the Minister for consideration. We will come back to the Committee to share the detail of that strategy, when we have it. A key component of that will be awareness-raising. In some ways, the principle is the same as it was, many years ago, with trying to raise awareness around issues such as domestic and sexual violence. You have to raise awareness in order to build confidence within communities to report, but you also have to be ready to develop a good strategic comms piece, because, when the confidence is there, the reports and the numbers will go up. That will be seen as a really bad news story or as the start of a good news story, because the confidence is there. We are acutely aware of the need to raise awareness and to bring in potential victims.

There is also a clear difference between the number of people identified — the percentages — in Northern Ireland relative to those in the rest of the UK. For example, 4% of victims of slavery and human trafficking in Northern Ireland have been trafficked within the UK. Compare that with the wider UK on a holistic basis: 49% are trafficked within the UK. We need to understand why there is that disparity. There is probably something to do with county lines and us having one police service when there are multiple constabularies in the UK.

There are many areas that we want to get our heads around. Awareness will form a key part of the modern slavery and human trafficking strategy, alongside the three themes of prevent, pursue and protect.

Graham, do you want to add anything, specifically around awareness and confidence-raising?

Mr Graham Walker (Department of Justice): Thank you, Chair. As Mark said, the training and awareness piece will form a large part of our three-year strategy. It will form part of that action plan.

Over 2022 and 2023, training has continued across a range of sectors, including PCSPs, the Prison Service, Compensation Services and DFC. One of our NGO partners has developed tailored e-learning. That e-learning has been made available. It looks at how to identify and report. Of course, we also had Anti-Slavery Week in October of last year. There was quite a lot of awareness-raising around that.

On your point about the NRM, we need to understand why the number of local individuals being referred to the NRM is so low in Northern Ireland. There is certainly a disparity between that and the number of persons in the UK. The number of UK nationals or local nationals within GB who are referred to the NRM is much higher than in Northern Ireland. A piece of research needs to be commissioned into that. Again, that would form part of our action plan. There have been a number of recommendations, including by CJINI, around trying to understand that dynamic, and that is in our forward work plan.

The Chairperson (Ms Bunting): I am glad to hear that you are alive to that. At the time it was created, that legislation was groundbreaking. I have never felt that we have implemented it in the way that we might have to the benefit of people who are being trafficked and enslaved. I have never been clear on whether we have been able to reach the people who need help, so it is helpful to hear that that is on your radar. Thank you. No doubt we will continue to follow that with interest.

I have no doubt that your figures are accurate. The issue is about the people we are not able to reach who find themselves in those circumstances. I am aware that the National Crime Agency (NCA) has done some good work and campaigning around that, too. Thank you very much.

Mr Bradley: Thanks very much for your presentation. I know that you have established some fantastic relationships, internationally and cross-border. Long may that continue.

My question is about the organised crime piece. How much of organised crime in Northern Ireland is still orchestrated and organised by paramilitaries? To what extent is organised crime by non-paramilitary organisations — crime gangs — gathering pace? Do you foresee an outbreak of violence between those groups over who controls what, not just in this country but in the Republic and the rest of the UK? We all know that organised crime is now Europe-wide, if not worldwide.

Mr Goodfellow: Yes. Thanks, Maurice. There is no doubt in my mind that there is a blurring of lines increasingly between organised crime and paramilitarism. We see that. The organised crime task force, obviously, is there and is pursuing people — individuals and organisations. We also have plans for more legislation, because, for organised crime, as you will be aware, there is no legislation at the

moment that can convict someone of directing or being a member of organised crime. You have to get them on a drugs charge or something else. That will absolutely strengthen our hand.

On the cross-border piece, you are right: we have strong relations between ourselves and Justice colleagues in Dublin, at a policy level and, probably, more importantly, at an operational level. The relationships between the PSNI and Garda Síochána have been particularly important, and we have seen those bear fruit in recent times.

Katie, is there anything that you want to pick up specifically on organised crime and the linkages?

Ms Katie Taylor (Department of Justice): Yes. To specifically answer your question, we would need to engage with PSNI colleagues to get a more detailed operational understanding and to see whether they could break down the figures on the percentage of organised crime gangs that have a paramilitary element.

To reiterate what Mark said about the structures working together, we obviously have the joint agency task force. It works on a cross-border basis, specifically looking at issues around organised crime and other crimes that have a cross-border basis for the paramilitary crime task force, which, as you all know, was set up under the Fresh Start arrangements to look specifically at paramilitary-related crime.

We also have the organised crime task force, which is a strategic structure that brings together operational, strategic and public-sector partners to make sure that we are making those linkages. Therefore, the work is not done in isolation; work around localised organised crime and paramilitary crime is not done in isolation. There are strong linkages between the two.

To go back to your original question, Chair, and the correspondence that we received from the Committee a week or so ago, something that we want to explore in the next iteration of the organised crime strategy is ensuring that those linkages are as strong as possible. We are conscious of the fact that you cannot draw neat boxes around organised crime and paramilitary activity: the two issues very much have a crossover. The linkages are there at the moment. Partners all talk to each other and are all working together, but we want to emphasise that and make sure that, in our strategic framework, going forward, we are making that as robust as possible.

Mr Bradley: Thank you very much.

Chair, I had a question about PCSPs, but you more or less stole my thunder. *[Laughter.]* Thank you.

Mr Dickson: Thank you for covering all those areas and topics with us.

You referred to bonfires and the fact that we are starting to move into that season now with the collecting of materials for bonfires. You are obviously not a landowner, but what advice and guidance are you giving to public-sector bodies that are landowners on transformation towards safer and more effective sites? What action is being taken where public authorities are failing or deliberately ignoring those sites that are abused by people who build bonfires on them? Furthermore, what are the public safety implications of that with regard to the land, buildings and, particularly, people who are involved in all that, when they do not have the approval of the landowner?

Mr Goodfellow: Indeed, it is an awful problem. As I said at the start, Stewart, you will be aware that DOJ does not hold policy responsibility for bonfires; indeed, no one does, which perhaps is part of the challenge that we face. That does not absolve us of responsibility, because we need to try to work upstream such that the police do not get drawn in where resources are scarce anyway.

I referenced earlier that we have a memorandum of understanding. Those are just three words, but, in effect, it means that we get together routinely throughout the year and not just in the immediate run-up to the bonfire and parading season. We have the Communities, Justice and Infrastructure Departments, the Housing Executive and the PSNI around the table. We run regular horizon-scanning sessions with them to try to anticipate where the problem sites are likely to be. We can name them around this table: in recent years, Adam Street has featured there; Hope Street has been there; and there are some other sites. We also work closely with the Fire and Rescue Service, which is proactive in going out, giving advice, and engaging at a community level with the PSNI. They are focused very much on the protection of life and property and the inherent risks that come with that, environmental as well as health and safety risks.

We have a strategic engagement group that sits at a more senior level, with the Executive Office, because we look at things such as Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition (FICT) and how we contribute to Together: Building a United Community. There is a clear role there for the Executive Office as well.

The MOU is more than a talking shop: it is the opportunity to bring together the key partners and the landowners to make sure that everyone understands what the inherent risks are and that every possible action is being taken to do that.

From our perspective, we lean in as much as we possibly can, but we do so whilst recognising the independence of the other organisations around the table.

Mr Dickson: Is there recognition that there are effectively what could be described as "repeat offenders" and public authorities and landowners who simply avoid taking any action?

Mr Goodfellow: By exception, that happens, yes. There is no question about that. There is a recognition; having the tools to deal with those is slightly more difficult. Michael, is there anything from your side?

Mr Michael McAvoy (Department of Justice): As Mark said, Stewart, the problematic bonfires are those that put people, property and the environment at risk, and our focus is genuinely on a very small number. You have to acknowledge that a lot of the bonfires pass off as a cultural celebration. They are enjoyed and do not do any of those three things.

The focus of the MOU group is to look at the ones that are problematic, and they are a very small subset. We have no powers to direct those landowners. We draw attention to the risks. The Fire and Rescue Service is not there to adjudicate a safe bonfire, because, let us be honest, there is no such thing as a safe bonfire. In the past, when they have given advice, sometimes people have come back and said, "But sure we did build it five metres for every one metre of height, and we still set fire to three houses in the lower Shankill estate". You cannot mitigate all the risks associated with a bonfire when it gets out of control.

Mark mentioned FICT: genuinely, I believe that that is the route to work out a positive way to celebrate culture that involves the use of a bonfire or a version thereof, which is safer and allows people to enjoy that aspect of the cultural celebration.

The Chairperson (Ms Bunting): There is a role for the Department for Communities too, because part of the difficulty is that people have been designing out cultural space, which leaves us in a situation.

Miss Hargey: I will start with the last point first, because you touched on it. It is good that Adam Street has moved on and progressed, so fair play to everybody involved, particularly the communities on the ground. There is a housing-led regeneration scheme there. That is really good, and it shows what can happen with engagement. Events over the last couple of years have pushed it in that direction.

My question is more or less about where there are still peace barriers, walls, physical barriers and segregation. As you touched on earlier, that often overlaps with social class, poverty, deprivation and inequality. The invisible barriers of class segregation are more visible in our urban settings particularly. It is around the history of how communities were redesigned in the 60s and 70s with defensive planning, which does not serve communities now in 2024.

What work is the Department doing to overcome the legacy of defensive planning and, obviously, the impact of conflict? How is it trying to work with other Departments to address social and economic inequalities? Is it trying to raise aspirations through community wealth-building and awareness of how land can be taken forward by public ownership? My query is around those issues. There is good practice from Adam Street: how is it progressing? I am keen to hear that.

My other point is about reinforcing the tripartite arrangements between the Department, the Policing Board and the PSNI. It is critical that those relationships and arrangements continue.

You touched on the terms of reference for the review of the Policing Board. I am keen for us to have access to the terms of reference and the timeline for the review. Is there a set timeline for when that review will be conducted, and, before it is approved or whatever, what is the process for the Policing Board in agreeing or signing off on that?

Your briefing paper mentions work being progressed on organised crime legislation, in terms of new offences, as well as provisions being brought forward via Westminster's Criminal Justice Bill. Is there more detail that could be sent to us on what that will involve and the impact of any potential Westminster legislation on extending powers here?

You touched on trafficking, and we may come back to it, but are Airbnbs having a housing impact? I am seeing that where I live in inner city Belfast, with the lack of oversight of Airbnbs. Are you finding that that is a more common theme in trafficking or not?

The Chairperson (Ms Bunting): Deirdre, in terms of time, with regard to the Criminal Justice Bill, we are about to cover some of that in the legislative consent motions session. If you are content, we will cover that later, Mark. The next set of officials will be able to deal with that issue.

Mr Goodfellow: Yes, they are coming in straight after us. OK, that is helpful.

I am going to ask Graham to come back to the trafficking point. I will cover the first two points, and Michael will jump in if there is anything to add.

On barriers and interfaces, the strapline that we are using in the Department is that, of the 59 structures that we inherited, one third have gone — they have been removed; one third have been reduced; the remaining third is where the focus has to be. As you know, the work on that absolutely has to be underpinned by the principle of community consent; so it is when the community is ready to move forward with that. We continue to work on that. Some really good work has been done recently. The vast majority of fencing around Derry's walls, for example, is now gone. That was a recent move, and we want to keep the momentum going on that.

On the wider socio-economic stuff, from a Justice perspective, we are keen to work more collaboratively with Health, Communities and housing, because it is all that socio-economic stuff upstream that will influence Justice downstream. Therefore, we are keen to continue to work on that.

I am glad that you recognise the tripartite relationships. You are absolutely right: those are critical, and they have been critical to surviving the past year, frankly. We have had some significant challenges. Chair, you will be aware of that from your previous role.

The Chairperson (Ms Bunting): I felt like I lived there for a while. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Goodfellow: The tripartite relationships were the glue that held a lot of things together. That tested the tripartite relationships in terms of how do we get through the data breach, the resignation of the Chief Constable, the unexpected absence of the deputy, and everything that flowed from that. There was no process map for that, but it was a good test of the tripartite relationships.

The Policing Board review flowed out of everything that happened there. That was announced originally by the board. When devolution returned, the Minister was clear that the Department ought to take ownership of that, and the Policing Board is content with that. With regard to how we take account of the views of the board, the Policing Board had already done a developed piece of work on terms of reference and areas that it would wish to see in the review. We have taken that and are doing some work. We are consulting some stakeholders. For example, we are meeting the Chief Constable tomorrow on that. The Minister will then take a view on the terms of reference, but we are absolutely happy to share those.

In broad terms, on where I see the terms of reference going, subject to the views of the Minister, there are some themes that we see as being critical. One might be strategic planning. By that I mean this: how does the board support, advocate and provide direction for the PSNI? Other themes might be board functionality and leadership of the board. The appointment process for chair is something that we need to think more carefully about, as is the wider governance arrangements. To what degree does the board espouse the highest standards of governance and propriety and all that? How does it listen to the community, take account of stakeholders' views and reflect them? Does it get the balance right, for example, between holding the PSNI to account and providing that support and advocacy role and outreach role? Those are some of the areas. I suggest, Deirdre, that there are actually some areas in there for us as well. How do we, as a Department, hold the board to account in the delivery of its role in the same way in which the board holds the Chief Constable to account? There is stuff in there for us, including looking at the executive support that the board and board members get from the chief executive and team. Is that fit for purpose, along with the composition and structure of board? It

is quite wide-ranging and not fixed. Those are the broad themes that I expect to flow out of the terms of reference.

The Chairperson (Ms Bunting): On that point, I declare an interest in that, at the time of that terms of reference agreement and piece of work, Maurice and I were on the board.

Mr Bradley: Yes. I will declare that interest too.

The Chairperson (Ms Bunting): It is better to have that on the record than not, I think.

Mr Goodfellow: Graham, do you want to pick up on the trafficking point specifically?

Mr Walker: To my knowledge, Airbnbs have not been raised as an issue specifically, but it goes to the point that we are all agreed on, which is that awareness across all sectors is really important. The Department has produced a range of leaflets in several languages, which have been shared with the PSNI recently. The PSNI goes out to estate agents and various others in that sector. As I said in my response to the Chair's question, the work on the ground with PCSPs in local areas is about ensuring that everyone in those areas is aware of the signs, knows how to report and is alive to the issues.

The Chairperson (Ms Bunting): Council officers, Royal Mail staff and teachers are important there too.

Mr Walker: Absolutely.

Ms Ferguson: I have just a quick question, because I am conscious of time and of the fact that a lot of areas have been covered. It relates to the community safety strategy that you hope to bring forward. Have you any timelines, and what resources would you put to that strategy? As someone who worked in the community and voluntary sector for 20-plus years, I am conscious that, whatever issue the community faces, whether it is bonfires, antisocial behaviour etc, the neighbourhoods, communities and investment of resources in local organisations can have a positive impact. That is what happened in the likes of Galliagh in my day when I was there, with youth education, education on safety and alternatives to bonfires etc. There was a range of really innovative good practice that cost very little. As you mentioned, collaboration is critical, particularly in housing and our new housing estates. There is still failure in the design of those estates to design out crime. All that type of stuff could be considered. It is great to see that there will be community engagement and consultation, as you mentioned in your paper, depending on resources. How important is the strategy and what are your thoughts on taking it forward and on how soon it could be taken forward?

Mr Goodfellow: Thanks, Ciara. CJINI recommended that we come back with a strategy and action plan within one year. I have to say that that will be a really challenging time frame, and I say that not because we lack ambition; quite the reverse. I am old enough to have been the owner of developing the first community safety strategy back in 2012, and that probably took a good 18 months with a dedicated project team. It took that long because we took it seriously, and we want to take this one seriously.

A few of us could sit in a darkened room and write the community safety strategy from within DOJ, but that is not going to land, because, whilst the Department of Justice needs to own it, the community safety strategy needs to be one that everybody across Northern Ireland can buy into. That brings us straight into that collaboration with Health, Communities, Education and other Departments, because it is the people who are failed by other socio-economic challenges who will find their way into the justice system. We need to find a way to get our socio-economic Departments on the hook, which is why we are proactively reaching out in other areas. Co-chairing the Cawdery inquest regroup is an example of DOJ's wanting to lean in and work with Health. We need to find a way to do that. We consciously put in the paper that it will require a dedicated resource, because if we do not have an additional dedicated resource, we will not do the issues justice. The other opportunity that we have — I see it as an opportunity rather than a challenge, Ciara — is that, with the timing, we are coming up to the development of the next policing plan. We have spoken briefly here about the development of a strategic approach to organised crime. We are talking about a new community safety strategy, and there is the consideration of the next iteration or mainstreaming of the work under the Executive programme for tackling paramilitarism and organised crime. All of a sudden, we have four or five big strategic issues in the justice space that we need to somehow land and align. I do not think that we should have four or five separate strategies; we ought to think carefully about how we can align and

maximise the value of them all. A phrase that I have heard recently — Katie and I were talking about this the other day — is that, in Northern Ireland, we used to launch ships, and now we launch strategies. The strategy is not the answer; the answer is the action plan, the impact it makes on local communities and whether people feel, in two, three or four years down the line, that we are starting to break down the social barriers that have existed for so long.

We are at the very early stages, Ciara, and that is the honest answer. We are doing a lot of desk-based research. We are doing jurisdictional comparisons by looking at colleagues not only in GB and Ireland but, given our international footprint, further afield to ask where else this work has been done. How much is it about prevention, intervention and upstream diversion, with less of a focus on the criminal justice interventions? That has to be the focus of the community safety strategy.

Ms Ferguson: That is good to hear. There is ongoing good work, and that is not to say that you have to wait on a strategy. There is loads of excellent work, and, as you say, the continuing collaboration can only bring new ideas and work. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Mr McAvoy: That probably links back to Deirdre's question about the Adam Street bonfire site and the collaboration on that. That was a traditional bonfire site for a number of years, then it was not, and the bonfire was returned to it in north Belfast. The situation was complicated because there were four different landowners, with DOJ requisitioning the land and putting an interface fence across the front of it. I am in danger of throwing flowers at the former Communities Minister, but I am going to do it shamelessly anyway, because the development of the Duncairn Gardens study provided the context for the regeneration of that site. It is a derelict piece of land in a disadvantaged area that lay empty for far too long, but, as Deirdre said, housing regeneration is the answer.

At other interfaces, working in partnership with Belfast City Council — I am thinking of Serpentine in north Belfast — we have been able to replace a playgroup and a multi-use games area and, in doing so, remove a former high interface security barrier. On that point, I hear what you say about the defensive architecture and stuff, and there is a lot of it, particularly in urban areas. Our focus, however, is primarily on those barriers that are there — they have been referred to as peace walls — under the security legislation for the preservation of peace and maintenance of order. Mark mentioned that a third had been removed and a third reduced in size, and some of those reductions are quite significant. Ciara will know that along Derry's walls, most of the barriers have gone, as Mark said.

People in Ardoyne will tell you that we removed the interface barriers at Flax Street, and we did. They closed off the street for 35-plus years, but we replaced them with an automated gate that opens and closes. The gate opens for 16 hours a day. It is a massive improvement and has allowed for increased traffic and pedestrian access and created additional regeneration, both housing and retail led, in the area. Collaboration is easy to say and hard to deliver. Genuinely, DFC, DOJ and Invest NI have worked together. The International Fund for Ireland is a critical partner, along with the community groups it funds and the elected members who work alongside in North Belfast and Adam Street were critical to coming up with a shared plan that communities can support.

We have not built anything yet, but the plans are in, the site has been sectioned off and Invest NI is realigning it. It is a positive story. There are stories from other areas where there have been traditional bonfire sites. Hope Street is another example in the city centre that is down for redevelopment. Those stories are always positive, but I hear your point, Chair, about the removal of space for cultural celebration and the acknowledgement of that. It is a consideration.

On the defensive architecture, Brandon Hamber from Ulster University and David Coyles have done some work on what they describe as "hidden interfaces" and defensive architecture, so we extend our brief to have those conversations.

The Chairperson (Ms Bunting): The balance is to make sure that people still feel safe and will not be subject to antisocial behaviour as a result of the removal. The balance has to be struck, and it is a difficult line.

Miss Hargey: It is about subtle bits; it is not about the critical interface barriers. It is more the defensive planning from the past in the conflict and how the barriers are now seen as economic barriers, particularly in working-class communities. That is the concern with access to jobs and people's perception that they are locked out of those things. It is probably of more concern in an urban setting than in a rural setting, but it is a key area.

Mr Beattie: Thank you for your presentation. Has the consultation on the injured on duty scheme started yet? It was due to start at the end of March. Has it started? Who will that consultation be with and how will it feed into how the review of the Policing Board will work? There is a lot of concern about the injured on duty scheme being under the resources committee of the Policing Board, which does not necessarily have the tools to deal with it. Can you explain how that works? Can you also explain how you are dealing with the issue that has come up of retrospective claims of being injured on duty, where people will possibly go for a legal case? How is that being dealt with? I am not sure that that has been addressed. Does that make sense?

Mr Goodfellow: Yes, it does. Thank you, Doug. I will give a couple of headlines, and, if she does not mind, Lynne can pick up on the detail.

The consultation has started. It launched on 26 March and is out for 12 weeks. It is with stakeholders such as the Police Federation for Northern Ireland and others. Clearly, there is no predetermined outcome, so we will see what the analysis of that consultation tells us. That will allow us to develop it. The four key areas that underpin the consultation are the recommendations from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report, which centre on things like whether it is fit for purpose; the purpose of IOD; and whether it represents value for money, so the public purse is considered. Secondly, it is quite a complex process, so there is the question of how we simplify it from end to end and streamline it. Thirdly, there needs to be a new case management system. That is linked to the previous point on streamlining. It is also about starting to close the gap and iron out some of the wrinkles and frustrations in the existing system. Those are the four recommendations on which the consultation is based. The consultation is out there, and we will see what stakeholders say. The Policing Board is a critical stakeholder therein. Do you want to add some detail in response to Doug's question, Lynne?

Ms Lynne Curran (Department of Justice): The roles and responsibilities of the PSNI, the Policing Board and the Department will be to form part of the consideration after the consultation closes. That has been on the cards for quite some time. We will look into that, but a choreography of events has to take place to enable us to start looking at the roles and responsibilities.

Mr Beattie: How do we narrow the injured on duty claims of somebody who has claimed retrospectively? At the minute, there are different claim dates. Somebody who is doing a retrospective claim for being injured on duty is told that they will get it from the time that they were injured, and somebody else is told that they will get it from when they were diagnosed with a psychological injury, but the regulations clearly state that it should be from the date of retirement. When will we bring that into line so that all the claims are taken from the date of retirement?

Ms Curran: That is all being considered as part of the consultation process. All those issues have been taken on board and will be looked at in due course.

Mr Beattie: Right. Sorry to labour the point, but does that mean that we are looking at how we manage the whole process through the resources committee of the Policing Board? Will that be looked at?

Ms Curran: The whole process, including the roles and responsibilities of each of the three organisations — that means the Department, the Policing Board and the PSNI — will be looked at.

Mr Beattie: I know that elected reps are uncomfortable with some of it, because they are not subject-matter experts on medical issues. They therefore adhere to what the selected medical practitioner says, even though they do not have a full understanding of it. It is about that sort of concern. But that will out.

Ms Curran: That will all be considered in the whole and in the round.

Mr Goodfellow: It is all up for grabs, Doug, so nothing is being excluded from the consultation process.

Mr Beattie: Thank you. That is good enough.

The Chairperson (Ms Bunting): That is it. Thank you so much. You can appreciate that your area of work is of huge interest to us, as was borne out in the questions, so thank you very much for taking

the time. We valued your briefing and look forward to working with you, and we will, no doubt, see you again. I apologise again for keeping you waiting outside for that length of time.