



Northern Ireland
Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE

**OFFICIAL REPORT
(Hansard)**

**Results of the Consultation on PCSP Code of
Practice for Independent Members;
Designated Organisations; and Code of
Practice for Functions**

13 October 2011

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Independent Members; Designated Organisations; and Code of
Practice for Functions**

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Paul Givan (Chairperson)
Mr Raymond McCartney (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sydney Anderson
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Basil McCrea
Mr Alban Maginness
Mr Jim Wells

Witnesses:

Ms Nicola Creagh)
Mr David Hughes) Department of Justice
Mr Declan McGeown)
Ms Amanda Stewart)

The Chairperson:

I welcome the officials from the Department of Justice (DOJ) to the table. They are Declan McGeown, who is head of the community safety unit; David Hughes, who is head of the policing policy and strategy division; Nicola Creagh from the community safety unit; and Amanda Stewart, who is the partnership manager of the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB). I advise Committee members and officials that the meeting will be recorded by Hansard. The transcript

will be published on the Committee's webpage.

I invite you to brief the Committee on the results of consultation and the proposed way forward. Members will then ask some questions.

Mr Declan McGeown (Department of Justice):

We are glad to be able to come along this afternoon to provide you with an update on the outcomes of the consultation on the implementation of policing and community safety partnerships (PCSPs) and to give you an outline of the proposed way forward. Before doing so, I will begin by highlighting some of the recent progress made on the establishment of PCSPs.

Since we last briefed the Committee, a number of key milestones have been achieved. For example, we recently gave councils an indication of the funding available in support of the partnerships in 2012-13. Such funding allocations will reflect the programme delivery, engagement, and staff and running costs allocated to the community safety partnerships (CSPs) and district policing partnerships (DPPs) in the current year.

Some councils have nominated political members to sit on the new PCSPs. Many councils are also making plans so that the existing DPPs and CSPs work together to ensure that the implementation process is as smooth as possible. Other preparatory work is ongoing, such as the holding of joint events for DPP and CSP managers and meetings of the project's reference group. Furthermore, in preparation for the recruitment of independent members, the Policing Board, assisted by departmental officials, is undertaking awareness-raising activity among stakeholder groups. Finally, the joint committee, which will set the strategic direction for the partnerships and monitor their progress, is due to meet next week.

As members will know, the purpose of the PCSPs is to deliver for local communities. The Minister is committed to ensuring that that can happen from April next year. Key to that will be our analysis of the results of the recent consultation on implementation. You will be aware that that consultation bore the badge of DOJ. However, like everything connected to PCSPs, it is very much a joint exercise between the Department and the Policing Board.

The consultation closed on 13 September 2011, and the response has been very encouraging. A total of 74 responses were received, across a wide range of sectors. I am sure that you will agree that that demonstrates a real interest in the future working of the PCSPs. You will be aware that the consultation is divided into three sections, dealing respectively with the code of practice for the appointment of independent members; the code of practice on the exercise of functions of the PCSPs; and designation. I will now give you an overview of the responses received on each. We are particularly keen to hear your views on the issues raised.

I will deal first with the code of practice on independent members. Recruiting sufficient numbers of independent members is vital to the establishment of the PCSPs. The consultation document was based on the current code of practice for the appointment of independent members to DPPs. As such, it draws on and reflects the views of the Policing Board on how the exercise would be best conducted.

Many respondents echoed the Committee's comments on the complexity and associated costs of the exercise. I know that officials and the Policing Board are considering the cost issue. If you wish, Amanda can provide more detail later. Again, echoing comments made by the Committee for Justice, respondents raised the issue of the use of merit in the appointment process. Of course, it is vital that candidates appointed to PCSPs be suitable; however, the current draft code of practice makes it clear that it is the council's responsibility to ensure that all candidates put forward to the Policing Board meet the necessary requirements. That is particularly important, as it is the Policing Board's view that, as endorsed at its 6 October meeting, in making appointments to PCSPs it would not consider the merit order of candidates following interview. We understand that the board is of the view that that approach best upholds its statutory duty to make appointments to the partnerships on the basis of representativeness.

Our Minister is minded to agree with that approach and to move quickly to finalise the code of practice for the forthcoming recruitment process so that the PCSPs can go live in April. Using the current draft code for the planned recruitment exercise will help to ensure that the PCSPs are up and running as soon as possible, alleviating issues around the loss of councillors from the DPPs and ensuring that the process of joint working to improve our communities can begin. In saying that, however, we acknowledge that a thorough review at the conclusion of the process

would be valuable. It is therefore proposed to conduct a review of the process ahead of the next recruitment exercise.

Some consultees also raised concerns about the ability to attract candidates of sufficient quality to the partnerships, specifically in light of the fact that there is no legislative provision for the payment of allowances. Although we acknowledge that that may be a problem, we believe that many people are already involved with and committed to improving their local community on a voluntary basis. That having been said, the Minister remains committed to ensuring that no one is left out of pocket as a result of their participation in the work of PCSPs. We are seeking to develop an appropriate expenses system to ensure that that is the case.

I now turn to the code of practice for the exercise of functions. Most consultees commented on the functions of PCSPs, and there was a general emphasis on the need for guidance, but that needed to be balanced with flexibility. There was a desire for streamlined functions, lines of reporting and flexibility to meet local needs for consultation arrangements and budgets. During our previous oral briefing in June, members raised issues in relation to the exercise of functions by PCSPs, including the arrangements for asking questions of the district commander and the potential for links with other local fora.

Looking at the responses more generally, several consultees highlighted the need to ensure that the PCSP worked as a coherent whole and suggested that public meetings and engagement be led by the wider PCSP. That was, however, balanced against the need for clear terms of reference for the policing committee. As members know, the policing committee has an explicit role that is clearly set out in the legislation. Although it is important that PCSPs work together in addressing local issues, the distinct role of the policing committee also needs to be set out clearly in the guidance. It will be for the joint committee to develop guidance on the functions of PCSPs that balances both those requirements. It will be particularly interesting to hear the Committee's views on how that can be achieved.

Many of you will be aware that, when the legislation for PCSPs was in Committee Stage, designation was a significant issue; you wanted to see designated organisations step up to the plate and take responsibility for community safety measures. You envisaged key bodies, such as

the PSNI and the Probation Board, sitting on all PCSPs. The initial outcomes of the consultation demonstrate clear support for that approach, with respondents listing a range of bodies appropriate for compulsory designation, including the Housing Executive, the PSNI, the Probation Board and the Youth Justice Agency. A further list is included in the briefing paper.

Although such targeted designation can, undoubtedly, enhance the effective working of a partnership, we also need to be aware of the potentially negative impact of too many compulsorily designated organisations. There needs to be balance between compulsory and local designation. We will consult PCSPs as soon as the political and independent members are in place; we anticipate that that will happen early in the new year. We will develop a policy that will be brought before the Committee at SL1 stage. In doing so, it would be useful to hear the Committee's views about which organisations could be compulsorily designated and how the power to designate could be used most effectively.

In closing, I invite members to comment on the questions posed in the papers, particularly on the proposed way forward for the code of practice for the appointment of independent members, the direction of travel in developing the code of practice on the exercise of functions and the organisations suggested for compulsory designation.

The Chairperson:

The Policing Board does not want to use the merit principle. Was that the unanimous view of the board?

Ms Amanda Stewart (Northern Ireland Policing Board):

It was. The issue was brought to the community engagement committee in the first instance, where there was significant discussion. There was also a strength of feeling from the engagements that we held as part of the consultation process and from the views of the Committee for Justice. Although appointments to PCSPs are not public appointments, in the previous DPP competition the board tried to adhere, as much as possible, to the guidance that was given by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. It was on that basis that the committee made a recommendation to the board meeting at the beginning of October, and the board has tried to adhere to that advice in making such appointments.

It all goes back to the code, which states clearly that, in making appointments, primacy should be given to representativeness and that the merit issue should be considered by the councils. Everyone who is deemed suitable for appointment is considered in relation to their representativeness by the Policing Board. Members recognised that although it is their statutory duty to uphold representativeness, with the legislation that is in place they are not in a position to look at merit, particularly as a result of the guidance from the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Members also reflected the fact that, when making ministerial public appointments, Ministers receive an unranked list of candidates and do not receive a candidate's position after interview.

The Chairperson:

Some Ministers receive a list of candidates with a status beside their names such as highly recommended, recommended, or suitable. Such candidates may not get a ranking, but Ministers will get a commentary about how an individual performed at interview, which can give an indication of where someone is.

I agree. However, councils must go through a rigorous process in nominating PCSP members. They must score candidates and they are under a great deal of scrutiny in carrying out that role, yet when the process reaches the Policing Board that work is consigned to the dustbin. If councils are to feel that their process is of any value, we must have a system in which the overriding principle is representation but which also has some kind of indicator as to the individual's performance. Otherwise you may find it difficult to find people to sit on the council bodies that go through that process.

Ms Stewart:

I fully appreciate that, and we looked at it when we considered advising the board. However, part of the difficulty of having such a system is that you require a huge pool of candidates. We generally do not have enormous pools, and when the primacy must be around representation there is not really the scope to look at a candidate's position following interview. As you go through each category, the list becomes smaller and smaller as appointments are made. We discussed that with the members, but overriding everything was the advice given by the Commissioner for

Public Appointments and the desire to adhere as far as possible to that guidance when making appointments.

Mr Wells:

The last time you were before us in June, I expressed my concern at the king's ransom that was required to recruit each member. Every minute that I sit on this Committee I think that I am in the wrong career. Initially I thought that I should have been a QC, a barrister or a solicitor; now I think that I should be doing the assessments for the various panels on behalf of the Department of Justice. The money that is spent is horrendous, given the outcome. I do not know whether you have taken that on board or whether you are still paying king's ransoms to individual consultants.

Mr McGeown:

We have certainly taken the views on board from the meeting in June. Perhaps Amanda would like to set out some of the thoughts that we had over the summer. Everything still needs to be ratified, but we are thinking about it.

Ms Stewart:

Following feedback from the Committee, we looked at the costs associated with the process. When I was here in June, I indicated that the estimated total cost was about £500,000. At this stage, we believe that there are projected savings of approximately £100,000, and, subject to council decisions, there are opportunities to scale that back further.

The Committee was particularly concerned about the costs associated with the use of recruitment consultants. Following that feedback, we developed an approach to minimise consultants' input where possible. For example, previously recruitment consultants had managed each of the processes, including issuing application forms, managing a helpdesk and enquiry line and all the administration. We propose that the board undertake that by using its own staff and resource at no additional cost.

We also agreed with councils that council panels made up of council political members would be supported by councils' HR staff as opposed to employing recruitment consultants. Although some councils indicated that they would re-charge the board for such a service, we expect to

deliver it much more cheaply than by using recruitment consultants.

We have also been able to pare back on smaller costs, such as the design and print of application forms and information booklets by bringing the services involved in-house rather than using design companies. Those costs are small, but, when added together, they contribute to a significant saving.

At this stage, the most significant cost remaining relates to councillor panel members' expenses, which are approximately £100,000. Feedback from the consultation suggests that we cannot look at removing those, given councillors' time commitment to the process.

Mr Wells:

I am sure that councillors would be united on that; I can say that now that I am no longer a councillor. *[Laughter.]* I might not have been able to say it a few months ago.

The public perception of the old-style bodies was disappointment. I deal with constituents' policing issues all the time, and the role of district policing partnerships is seldom, if ever, mentioned by anyone other than someone on a partnership or the odd person with a grievance who ruthlessly follows the panels around meetings in various locations. In my South Down constituency it is not unusual for nobody to turn up at such a meeting. There is nothing so pathetic as a large leisure centre set out for a meeting of 200 people with the DPP at the middle, and all that can be heard is the echo.

In places such as Foyle, where there are, literally and metaphorically, burning issues, you will get good turnouts. However, the trend is for DPP meetings to be non-events in more settled communities where there is less controversy. Is there any review mechanism to check whether DPPs deliver? We have allowed the present system to drift for far too long. I say that about DPPs and not about community safety partnerships, which have been at the other extreme: a tremendous success. Practically every week there is something about an initiative from them in my local press. They have almost solved the bonfire problem single-handedly by introducing beacons and bringing a community spirit and carnival atmosphere, which is brilliant.

I do not want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. However, on the DPP end, is there a review mechanism for checking five years' time whether they are delivering?

Mr McGeown:

The ethos for creating the PCSPs is to take and meld the best of CSPs and the DPPs. I believe that locally developed action plans will take best account of what is going on in areas and ensure that it is developed locally. The joint committee's role will be important in looking at PCSPs' effectiveness in delivering what communities want. The simple answer is that yes, there will be a mechanism to look at their effectiveness upfront.

Mr Wells:

When will that be triggered? How long will you be allowed to let the new system roll out before you start to check whether it is delivering?

Mr McGeown:

We are still looking at how we measure effectiveness, but the joint committee will meet regularly, perhaps every five or six weeks to look at performance. The briefing for the joint committee will come from officials from the Policing Board and the Department of Justice and will say how well PCSPs are performing.

Mr Wells:

On a technical issue: my former council had a full-time DPP officer who was employed by the council but with what I believe was a significant subsidy from the Policing Board to pay his wages. We also had a full-time community partnership officer paid directly by the council. Will those two roles be combined? Are there potential savings to be made there?

Mr McGeown:

Although we have been out consulting over the past few months, including talking to councils' chief executives, there is a balance to be struck between how prescriptive we are and the staffing structures that they would like to develop. We will probably go down the path of saying that there is a pot of money to run your PCSP, including its front-line delivery. We will then work with them to develop a staffing structure around that. However, the view of some councils is that

they want to develop the staffing structure themselves based on what will be more effective in their areas. We will work with them.

Mr Wells:

Is any of this predicated on RPA? Or will it go ahead regardless?

Mr McGeown:

It will go ahead regardless, if that is the right word, but it does not preclude us from taking account of RPA as it develops.

Mr David Hughes (Department of Justice):

The legislation is cast in such a way that there will be a PCSP for each of the 26 districts, Belfast being an exception. However, if there are 11 districts, there will be 11 PCSPs. There is also a facility that if existing districts agree to work together in a group, they can do so. There is a capacity to work towards a different arrangement when there is a different number of councils.

Mr Wells:

Have senior police officers bought into the idea of more openness and flexibility? I have found that some divisional commanders go into Castlereagh mode: “Tell them nothing. If it’s not submitted in writing in triplicate weeks in advance, I’m not interested.” Even if a burning issue — and bonfires are a burning issue — arises and a senior officer knows that the people at the meeting will want to deal with it, their attitude is still that if an issue is not on the agenda they will not touch it. Will there be absolute flexibility once the new system has been introduced?

Mr Hughes:

What we are hearing from the PSNI is real enthusiasm about the new partnerships as they offer the capacity to bring together the issues that are being raised through the functions of the DPPs at present as well as the delivery of solutions and responses. There is a real appetite on the part of the PSNI to make the partnerships work.

One of the secondary issues that flow from experience of DPPs is to what extent can setting a code of practice around the exercise of the partnerships’ functions dictate how people run with

the PCSPs' functions and to what extent it is about a cultural shift to embrace the new regime. There has been a consultation exercise on the paperwork, but there is ongoing work with stakeholders to encourage everyone to see the opportunity that this affords to work much more effectively in partnership.

Mr Dickson:

Thank you for your explanations so far. Unlike Mr Wells, I remain a councillor but am excluded from any DPP because I am a member of this Committee. There is still an issue about the replacement of elected representatives, which is annoying for political parties; it affects not just me but everyone.

I genuinely understand where the Policing Board is coming from; however, it is out of step with all the commentators on the appointment process. Through no fault of their own, many councils are male-orientated, so, even with parties' best intentions, a higher proportion of male than female councillors will come forward as elected representatives. That dictates the balance of community representatives to be appointed. In my DPP all females had to be appointed because all but one of the elected representatives were male.

I cannot remember what the outcome of applying the merit system would have been, but it did not put all seven females in first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh places. However, that is what we got. That seems wrong to me. I accept that ranking is not practical, given the overriding public appointment process in which everybody who clears the bar is eligible and can therefore be appointed. If ranking cannot be considered, can some consideration be given to the banding of candidates in a high, medium and lower category in the eight, nine or 10 names that have to go forward?

You have to take some account of the fact that if you are only getting 20 candidates and 10 names have to go through, although 10 will clear the bar they will pass it on a scale. You cannot get away from that; those are hard cold facts. The principle of the public appointments system seems to me to be overriding natural justice and the principle of appointing people on the basis of their ability to do a job.

In fact, some people are shocked and surprised that they are appointed. Some rise to the challenge remarkably well; sadly, however, many flounder because they are only there because of their sex or whatever has put them in that position. I urge you to think of some more imaginative way than just taking all the candidates who clear the bar. If you cannot rank them, at least some consideration could be given to banding.

Ms Stewart:

We would need to take advice on banding, and I would need to bring it back to the board. My instinct is that banding is considering position following merit at interview in another way.

Mr Dickson:

The alternative is arguably that councils should mark harder and not put more people through.

Ms Stewart:

I was going to say that.

Mr Dickson:

That is counter to the quantity issue. It is quite difficult. The first time round there were high numbers, but the numbers have been reducing. We can debate the merits of whether payment is an incentive or whether childcare arrangements or out-of-pocket expenses for mileage are a more appropriate way. Perhaps they are. The problem is that fewer people are interested, and therein lies a further problem.

Ms Stewart:

That issue was discussed at the community engagement committee. There were two aspects to it. The first was ensuring that the people who are put forward are deemed suitable for appointment and making sure that councils are clear that anyone whose name goes forward is deemed suitable for appointment, although I appreciate the difficulties with that. The other aspect was putting a robust process in place to make sure that if people were not stepping up to the mark or able to do the job, there were mechanisms in place to make sure that they were replaced on the partnerships instead of allowing people to continue not making an effective contribution.

Mr Dickson:

Having had direct experience of that, it proved virtually impossible to have someone leave a DPP simply because of their absence.

Ms Stewart:

The board is very keen to ensure that it is —

Mr Dickson:

It was a bitter experience.

Ms Stewart:

I appreciate that.

Mr McCartney:

The Policing Board has written out about political appointments. Did that come before the community engagement committee?

Ms Stewart:

No; it did not.

Mr McCartney:

Was that for any particular reason?

Ms Stewart:

It was a joint letter that was issued at the beginning of September by the Department of Justice and the interim chief executive of the Policing Board. Its purpose was to advise them that we were hoping to begin the process of appointing independent members to the partnerships in late October or early November. For that reason, we need the political member appointments so that we can train them to sit on the panels. Therefore at the same time as we launch the recruitment process, we would have to undertake a process of identifying the councillors who are to sit on the panels and to look at the balance of those panels as well so that we can put on independent panel members from the CoPANI list. It was an administrative exercise.

Mr McCartney:

Whose responsibility is it to ensure the requirement for proportionality to party strength? Was that in the letter?

Ms Stewart:

No. There is no guidance on the process. All we were doing was asking the councils to initiate that. Issues have arisen from that as the process has taken place across councils, and the board is to consider it at the next community engagement committee meeting. Under the legislation, the board has no authority to set direction; responsibility is clearly with councils. However, the board wants to discuss whether it can challenge decisions by councils in relation to political representation under the legislation.

Mr McCartney:

Therefore responsibility lies with councils and not with the board, which has no role in ensuring the statutory requirement?

Ms Stewart:

No; it is very clear.

Mr McCartney:

I expressed concern at the previous meeting about the document and the consultation process and our submission. Is the model for the structures of the new policing committees compliant with Patten in relation to accountability?

Mr Hughes:

The policing committee retains the functions of the DPPs in particular without change; the difference is the context in which they are set in a whole partnership. There was a consultation on the code of practice for the exercise of functions. The functions of the policing committee will be distinct in some ways from the functions of the overall partnership. It may well be that the code of practice needs to be specific about some of the functions that apply particularly to the policing committee because it will most likely operate in a different way at a different time. It

sustains the importance of those functions but also links those functions to the role of the wider partnership, which, hopefully, should make the policing committee functions even more effective in delivering for the district.

Mr McCartney:

OK. Will the strategic direction and governance of the policing committees come from the Policing Board as was the case for the DPPs?

Mr Hughes:

Yes. The relationship between the policing committees and the Policing Board is clear, specifically on their functions.

Mr McCartney:

Seventy five per cent of the funding stream comes from the Policing Board.

Ms Stewart:

No. The previous legislation provided for 75% funding from the Policing Board and a 25% requirement from councils to make it up; it is now just a grant from the board and the Department. There is no requirement for councils to contribute a set amount.

Mr McCartney:

How will the figure be determined?

Mr McGeown:

It is an amalgamation of the budget streams that have gone before, with the exception of the allowances. The funding stream for next year is for the CSP and DPP funding, as before, amalgamated.

Mr McCartney:

In times past, the lines of finance going to DPPs were very clear. If a council wanted more administrative staff, and less money goes to the functions of a DPP, who is responsible for ensuring that that is not the case? Is it the council or the Policing Board?

Mr McGeown:

The Department of Justice and the Policing Board will work out a block amount of money for each of the PCSPs. That will come as a single funding stream to the council area, which will have developed its action plan setting out what it wants to buy. We will make the money available to the council. We are still working with Policing Board colleagues to determine how the lines of accountability will work, but as far as the council is concerned, there will be a single funding stream from the Department of Justice and the Policing Board working together.

Ms Stewart:

The governance for the funding comes through the joint committee, which comprises the Policing Board members and the Department of Justice officials. Agreement on funding is not done at board level; it is done by the members of the joint committee, which is established in statute.

Mr McCartney:

Therefore the joint committee would have the responsibility if it felt that the funding was not being used in a way that ensured that the system was working.

Ms Stewart:

Yes.

Mr McCartney:

We talked about designation in previous briefings. There is discretion about who can or cannot be called to a meeting. Have we arrived at a fixed position on compulsory calling? Can a statutory body be compelled to appear before a community safety partnership?

Mr Hughes:

Colleagues will stop me if I get this wrong, but the legislation is cast in such a way that when a partnership designates a number of organisations to join the partnership, that is, in effect, compulsory. They are required to send representatives to be on that partnership as a member. Therefore, the responsibility lies with the partnership to decide which organisations will be designated. Moreover, organisations can be designated to all partnerships by Order. The

guidance that is provided by the joint committee should help designated organisations to understand what their role is and how they should play a part.

Mr McCartney:

If, for instance, in a district, the Housing Executive were one of the designated bodies, would its designation also cover housing associations and private landlords?

Mr Hughes:

It would cover the organisation that is designated. If the Housing Executive were designated, it would need to send a representative. If the partnership wanted to engage other housing organisations, it could decide to designate representatives from them to the full partnership. It would have to take a decision —

Mr McCartney:

I do not mean that three or four housing bodies would attend, but, from the point of view of overall responsibility, if the Housing Executive were brought in as part of a community safety partnership, and the housing associations and private landlords, who may be drawing housing benefit, were excluded, how would you impose on them a solution to the problem of antisocial behaviour?

Mr Hughes:

This is an instance of the power in the legislation for a partnership to set up working groups and delivery groups that bring organisations together to help. There is not the same compulsion in getting people involved. In some instances, it may be a challenge for the partnership, but it is more likely to be an opportunity for it to bring together interested organisations and demonstrate to them the value that they can bring and the contribution that they can make.

Mr B McCrea:

I am almost losing the will to live on this topic. Never has so much effort been spent for so little gain. I am in sympathy with Mr Dickson about the costs of recruitment. How can it cost £500,000 — £400,00 if you save £100,000 — to recruit people whom you are basically shovelling in without merit anyway?

Ms Stewart:

Merit is considered by the council panels.

Mr B McCrea:

There is an issue of political correctness here. We are trying to get gender balance. We are trying to do too much. If councils were to choose to put forward an all-male list of candidates, it would be a problem under equality legislation. There may be councils with an all-male membership, but, even then, if the councils cannot make their quota, that is the councils' problem, not the Policing Board's problem. The Policing Board, or whoever is going to select independently, will do so while taking care to ensure that it has regard to gender, age and all the specific requirements. Why does the Policing Board have to pay the penalty for others that are deficient in their duty?

Ms Stewart:

I agree, but the board's remit in legislation relates to the representativeness of independent members. It has no authority to get involved, and that links back to Mr McCartney's question on political member appointments. We cannot provide any guidance or direction to councils on the members whom they put forward.

Mr B McCrea:

Amanda, you are choosing to answer my question, but it was not necessarily directed at you.

Ms Stewart:

Everybody looked at me.

Mr B McCrea:

I happened to be looking casually in that general direction. Legislation is coming through for political correctness. I am in danger of agreeing not only with Mr Dickson but with Mr Wells. I declare an interest as a former member of the Policing Board who had the privilege of being involved in this process. What is the function of the combined DPPs and CSPs, and what do we hope to achieve with them?

Mr McGeown:

The PCSPs?

Mr B McCrea:

Yes.

Mr McGeown:

To develop solutions locally to community safety-type problems. It is about deciding what high-level objectives need to be addressed and looking at how we can deliver on those locally. That is what we are trying to achieve.

Mr B McCrea:

How will you know if they have been effective?

Mr McGeown:

You set indicators at the outset and look at —

Mr B McCrea:

What indicators have been set?

Mr McGeown:

We have not got to that stage yet. However, we are developing strategic objectives in conjunction with the Policing Board that will help to dictate the work. That will permeate down to a local level, where it will be translated into local objectives, against which people will measure their performance.

Mr B McCrea:

I believe in finding local solutions to local problems. It is a good idea to get around the table all those who might be involved to try to address issues such as antisocial behaviour or areas of concern. Therefore, in concept, the organisations put forward may have a role to play. However, there is a real danger that we are trying to get the form right before the function and that we are

trying to shoehorn objectives that are not clearly defined. We are in danger of this not working.

My conclusion is that we may as well get on with this and see whether it works. I have my doubts that it will work in the format that we have in front of us, and I feel that we will need to review it within two years. If you end up spending £500,000 on the selection process, I suspect that there will be questions asked in different places. There must be a considerably cheaper way of making those appointments. I will finish on that point; I do not need to go on. I am sort of fed up with it.

The Chairperson:

You have got it off your chest.

Mr B McCrea:

I have. Thank you, Chairperson; you have been most indulgent.

Mr S Anderson:

I do not know what to say. I declare an interest as a member of Craigavon Borough Council and as someone who has served on DPPs and CSPs from the start — certainly for the past eight years. Like my colleague Stewart, I was probably rescued from them by coming on to the Committee for Justice. I am not trying to be unkind.

Many of the points that I wanted to raise have been touched on, so I will not labour them. However, Amanda, £500,000 is crazy money to carry out a recruitment and selection process. You have said that you have found £100,000 somewhere, but I would like to think that the total figure would still be a lot less. That is a lot of money to do what you have been asked to do. Having been involved in interviews in the past, I know that councils put a lot of effort into the process. I have a problem with spending that sort of money on consultants, and I hope that you will look seriously at bringing that figure down further.

You may know that the Craigavon DPP and CSP had a very good working relationship. Both worked out of the same office and were very effective. Taking on board what my colleague Jim said, the public meetings were not, in most cases, well attended. In fact, one evening I was at a

public meeting at which the attendance was one, who was a reporter. That was at an early stage, but it tells you something of the level of interest at the time. There is a problem there.

Basil asked what we hope to achieve. I would extend that slightly by asking what we hope to achieve that will be any better than what we already have? Surely, when entering into any new process, the aim is to try to better the existing situation, and I wonder whether that will happen. Can you see that? We seem to be heading into the unknown, and we do not know where we will arrive after all the expense.

Mr McGeown:

I think that we will see it better. There has been a lot of consultation, not just on this issue but on, for example, the process of developing a community safety strategy. We have listened to and taken on board the views of people locally, and we are now designing a strategic direction that people have bought into.

As to what the difference will be, when people start seeing the results locally, more than one man and a dog will turn up to meetings. When people start to see how effective the PCSPs can be, they will start to engage more. That strikes at the heart of the community safety strategy, through which we are trying to develop more confident communities. They will see the results and want to get involved. We will start to get that right, but I do not say that it will happen overnight. I take Mr McCrea's point: for the first year or two, we might almost be learning as we go along.

However, many change processes are like that. As we work through this, we will get better at it and will learn to develop solutions locally to problems that happen locally. I am more optimistic about it, because I think that this takes the best of the CSPs and DPPs. We have the backdrop of a community safety strategy that has been agreed and into which people have fed locally. We also have a policing plan. If we take the best of all of that, I think that we will get positive solutions at a local level.

Mr S Anderson:

You are more optimistic than you were before?

Mr McGeown:

I am about, as you said, people turning up to meetings. If we come with something that interests local communities, and people see the results, even by virtue of having more people turn up, it would be a success. Getting more people engaged in the process would be a success, and getting Departments and agencies to work together around the table is a success. Members referred to problems in the past. Let us try to address them and use the PCSPs to fix them.

Mr S Anderson:

In Craigavon, certainly, we get people not turning up. Jim said that, where a DPP meeting concerned local issues at any one particular time, people could not get questions answered. That was perhaps a problem, but, at times, the local commander was quite co-operative and would answer those questions.

May I talk about representation? The designated bodies were touched on, and I mentioned them at the previous Committee meeting that you attended. In the brief, it says that representation from designated bodies

“should be at a senior level”.

Is “should be” strong enough? From my past experience of CSPs, some representatives did not turn up. Bodies sent different representatives at different times. Surely we should have a commitment from the people that are supposed to represent those designated bodies that is as firm as that from the politicians and independent members that sit on the PCSP. They are there to represent their body and input their views on matters that affect the local community. Are the words in the briefing paper strong enough, or can we force designated bodies’ hand?

Ms Stewart:

We discussed this before, when we attended previously.

Mr S Anderson:

I think that we did.

Ms Stewart:

We hope, and this was part of the consultation process, to look at the guidance that will provide for designated organisations and consider the best way in which we can achieve representation on the PCSPs that is appropriate to the issue. We may need someone who can make a decision on whatever the partnership wants to do. It might be that we agree with designated bodies that they send an officer of sufficient rank. That is an issue for the guidance that we intend to put together. As Declan said in his opening remarks, we intend to put together that guidance in the joint committee, and the Committee will have an opportunity to look at it and consider issues of “should”, “would” and “will” — whatever the guidance has to say on that. Therefore, there will be an opportunity to look at that again.

Mr S Anderson:

I am pleased that the majority of respondents have looked at that issue, and the majority of them have stated that such representation should be at a senior level. Obviously, that is what they are looking for.

Can I return to the funding aspect? The Department contributes 75% of DPPs’ expenditure. Will we lose out on that? Do we know what pot of money is available in the bank for PCSPs? CSPs were 100% funded, and DPPs were funded 75% by government and 25% by councils. However, is the pot of funding that has now gone to this new set-up going to be less overall, more or something the same as what the CSPs and DPPs had? I am trying to hone in on the 75%. Will that be taken out, or will the same amount of money be made available?

Mr McGeown:

We are still working the figures through, but early indications are that the figures will be broadly the same as in previous years. The short answer is that it will not be less. I do not expect it to be less, because we are bringing together funding streams. It will be broadly similar to what people have had before from the Department and the Policing Board.

Mr Hughes:

The movement from the 75%/25% split in funding of DPPs is simply because there will no longer be a required 25% from local councils. However, all councils and organisations involved in the

partnerships see how effective they are, additional resources will be committed to them. It is to the benefit of the council and organisations working in a district to make them even more effective.

The Chairperson:

Who takes the final decision on how the recruitment process operates? Is it the Department or the Policing Board?

Ms Nicola Creagh (Department of Justice):

The Department is in charge of issuing guidance, and the board is the practitioner that will carry it out. The Department and Minister will issue guidance to the board, and it will the conduct the exercise.

The Chairperson:

Is the guidance purely a guide? Can the board ultimately choose to ignore it?

Ms Creagh:

No, it is a code of practice. The board must carry out its functions as detailed in the code of practice that it will get.

The Chairperson:

Thank you all very much.