The Scottish Parliament

Justice Committee

18th Report, 2008 (Session 3)

Report on Inquiry into Community Policing

Published by the Scottish Parliament on 3 October 2008

15:00

On resuming—

The Convener: The next part of this afternoon's business is a link-up with Professor Wesley Skogan in Chicago. Good afternoon, Professor Skogan, or in your case—

Professor Wesley Skogan (Northwestern University): Good morning.

The Convener: Good morning.

I am the convener of the Justice Committee. I will introduce the members of my committee. Stuart McMillan is sitting on my extreme right. Next we have Margaret Smith, Cathie Craigie, Paul Martin and Bill Butler, who is the committee's deputy convener. The gentleman to my right is Nick Fyfe, who is a committee adviser. The other committee members present are Nigel Don and John Wilson.

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in a videoconference with us. As you are aware, the committee is carrying out an inquiry into policing in general. We have reached the stage of focusing on community policing.

We will move straight to questions, if that suits you. How do you define community policing? What are its key features?

Professor Skogan: There are three underlying principles. The trick is how they get turned into programmes on the ground, which varies considerably from city to city, because in my country the police are highly decentralised and locally controlled. However, the same three principles underlie most community policing around the country.

The first principle is to establish what we call a turf orientation, which has to do with decentralising police and affixing responsibility for particular pieces of geography—neighbourhoods, police beats and precincts—to individual units.

The second principle is civic engagement, the organisation of which by communities and police departments varies enormously from city to city. Some places have advisory committees to the chief of police, some have citizens police academies and some conduct public opinion polls. In Chicago, which I will talk about later, we have public meetings between the police officers who work in neighbourhoods and the residents who live in them.

The third feature of community policing in the United States is that, of necessity, it involves the police adopting an extremely broad problem-solving view of the nature of the problems that they face. For reasons that I can discuss, that is one of the prices of civic engagement. The public come to meetings to talk about their problems. The police must be organised to respond affirmatively, if only by connecting systemically with other city services. The three general principles of community policing are turf orientation, civic engagement and a broad problem-solving focus, but how it manifests itself in every municipality is strikingly different.

The Convener: We accept that.

As you are a professor of political science at Northwestern University in Chicago, perhaps we could ask some questions specifically about Chicago. What was the main catalyst behind Chicago's decision to introduce a new community policing strategy?

Professor Skogan: First, the decision to do that was rooted in the best possible reason—politics. The mayor perceived that he had several problems on his hands, one of which was that in the early 1990s, crime rates were going through the ceiling. We had terrible waves of homicides and street drug wars, and demands were made that something be done. The mayor could point to the fact that he was doing something about his police department as an affirmative response to the problem.

Secondly, the police in Chicago were of pretty low repute—they were not very popular. Broadly, they were thought to be lazy, ill-organised and more than usually corrupt, and were considered to be not particularly good public servants in a whole number of ways. When the mayor went to community forums around the town, he always heard complaints about the police not coming when they were called or driving by when people tried to flag them down in the street, so he felt that he had to introduce some responsiveness into his police.

Thirdly, the mayor was facing a changing city. Chicago is now about one third African-American, one third Hispanic—almost all the Hispanic people are from Mexico—and slightly less than one third native white. The native white portion of the population is declining and the number of Hispanics is increasing enormously. The mayor had to find ways to react to that diversity and to crime problems in a way that was seen as affirmative and positive and which incorporated people. He could not stay in office blaming people for the problem; he had to make them part of the solution.

The natural response in Chicago was to turn to its city neighbourhoods, which are a strong component of our civic life, and to try to find a way to link the police and neighbourhoods into crime prevention in a way that the general public would see as positive and affirmative. As a result, we had a community policing programme. We did not have a programme to increase the number of police or to put more people in jail; we had a programme to incorporate the public and try something new. It was a response to a series of political and policy problems that the mayor faced.

The Convener: That is interesting. I invite Stuart McMillan to examine the strategy in a little more detail.

Stuart McMillan: Professor Skogan, you said that incorporating the public was key to the programme. What were the other key elements of the Chicago alternative policing strategy?

Professor Skogan: Chicago chose to hold public meetings every month in every one of its small police beats—there are 280 beats, so they are not very big. The police would meet the public to exchange information and discuss problems. Other cities do not do that. Some cities have advisory committees at higher levels, which are more manageable. Other cities conduct opinion surveys or hold police academies. People come from all over the world to see the meetings that Chicago holds, because they are so unusual, so please do not think that having such meetings is the usual response.

The average meeting lasts about 70 minutes. Each beat meets once a month in facilities within the beat. Large numbers of meetings are held in church social halls and basements, school buildings, park district buildings or hospital cafeterias—whatever institution the police can find that will provide a nice safe home in which to have the meetings on a monthly basis. On average, five police officers come to each meeting. There is often a representative of city agencies, and people from specialised units of the police department, such as detectives, come to report on concerns that people raised at the previous meeting. In good weather, 35 to 45 residents will attend the meeting. Over the course of the year, about 67,000 people have attended beat meetings, and something like 700,000 people have attended over time.

At first, people did not know how to hold a beat meeting, but the meetings have evolved over time. The typical meeting has three parts. First, the sergeant who is present reports back on what has been done since the previous meeting and there is a discussion. One of the things about having a meeting every month is that there is continuity, because the same officers and a number of the same residents attend. There is a discussion of

old business, followed by a discussion of new problems and what people should be thinking about in the coming month. People raise issues that had not previously come to the table.

A lot of information is exchanged. Crime maps and one-page reports on the top 10 crimes in the beat in the past three months are passed out. All kinds of information is made available in English, Spanish and Polish, which is our third biggest language. The meetings allow for the exchange of information and, in a funny way, which the police did not anticipate, they are also accountability sessions, because people hear reports about what has been done since the previous meeting. It is hard to find much government that has such a tight feedback relationship between government agencies and the public. A remarkable little thing has emerged in those 280 monthly meetings.

Stuart McMillan: To summarise, there are three key elements: public meetings, the exchange of information and the accountability sessions. Is that correct?

Professor Skogan: The accountability sessions have evolved, and it is my description, not the police department's. People meet the police, hear what they have done and complain or give them approval and say, "That's terrific, we've seen big progress on the problem." That little accountability feedback loop has emerged as an important part of Chicago's programme. That is what happens when a body engages the public regularly. As a consequence, the public are critical and rewarding, when they see their concerns being responded to.

Stuart McMillan: What changes did the programme require in the Chicago Police Department and how were they achieved?

Professor Skogan: One of the biggest changes in the police department was the move to a turf orientation. Previously, Chicago, like many cities, had a computerised dispatching system. A call would come in and the computer would pick up the next available car, which would be dispatched. Cars would drive around here, there and everywhere in the course of an evening, often ending up pretty far from where they started. There was no connection between calls, so two or three teams of officers might respond to problems in a single block in the course of a night. In other words, it was a nice, modern, efficient and professional system.

Instead, the city decided to take some of its officers—it turned out to be about 2,800 of them—and give them a new title. They are the beat teams. Each of the 280 police beats has a beat team. The beat teams simply answer calls in their beat. By and large, they do not do anything special, although they have had extra training.

The computer dispatching system was changed. The contractors who developed it were brought back in to rewrite the software so that the computer now strives to keep the beat team cars and officers in their beat for dispatches. That may sound simple, but it brought a big change in operations. Now, when somebody calls the police, by and large their beat team will answer and, if they call again next week, by and large the beat team will answer. Further, when people go to their beat meeting, the officers from the beat team will be there, so people have a chance to see them in that context.

The aim is to keep the beat officers in their assigned beat about 70 per cent of the time, although, of course, they go elsewhere and emergencies do arise. In addition, there are calls that the beat team cannot take because they are busy. In that case, rapid response units come in and take up the slack. However, by and large, week in and week out, the great majority of the calls in a beat are answered by the dedicated beat team. They are not, by any definition, special units—they answer calls. Many cities have special units that are set aside for community policing. The officers in the units are not ring fenced, so they are constantly called off to serve in other units or to deal with a crisis or emergency. However, in Chicago, the beat teams answer the calls. Somebody has to answer the calls. It is really a dispatching system trick that turns them into beat teams.

There is one additional difference, besides the special training. Beat teams have special sergeants—beat unit sergeants—who oversee the teams' activities, attend the beat meetings with the public and take general responsibility for co-ordinating the officers as teams. A team is about nine or 10 officers, which is roughly what it takes to do three shifts a day, seven days a week. It is not a problem when people go on vacation or are ill. By and large, the teams just do regular policing, but they fix it on the turf that they serve and come to know and work with the communities who live there.

Stuart McMillan: It sounds a bit like the KISS—keep it simple, stupid—method that one hears about in managerial speak from time to time.

How transferable is the system to other cities in the United States and further afield to places such as Scotland?

15:15

Professor Skogan: I think that some parts of it are transferable, but there is a governance problem with making other parts of it work. I will talk about that, as it is an important issue. There is a big difference between our system and your

system. You could do the turf orientation, which essentially involves making local unit commanders responsible and having officers stay on the beat. That is a sensible solution that brings many benefits, and it does not increase the need for manpower much. People have to work with the dispatching rules and manage things. Could you do civic engagement? You could develop various ways for the public to interface with the police, talk to them, discuss priorities and bring problems to the table. That could be done in many different ways.

However, it seems to me that there is another problem: organising the response to community concerns. In my experience, some countries have had difficulties in that respect. As I say, if a person goes out at night and meets 35 to 45 members of the public, those members of the public will bring to the table the things that concern them. One thing that Chicago learned early on was that people could and would bring a broad variety of concerns to the table. It was expected that a lot would be heard about crime problems, but it turned out that residents in many neighbourhoods were bothered by many things that only marginally fell within the police's jurisdiction. They wanted to talk about such things, which is why they were there. Chicago, therefore, had to organise quickly mechanisms for responding to a much broader range of concerns, which inevitably involved other city agencies and service agencies, such as organisations that collected the garbage and that poisoned rats in the alleys. If a complaint was made at a beat meeting that there were rats in an alley, the police could note that on their forms, but they certainly could not do anything about it themselves. The police must have enough contact with municipal agencies that deal with rats in alleys to mobilise a quick response to a concern that has been expressed.

Because American governance is so decentralised and the police are, like many services, a municipal responsibility, people work in the same service areas. The police, garbage collectors, people who deal with water, people who clean the streets and people who tow away abandoned cars all work for the same city council, the same mayor and respond to the same set of voters and taxpayers. The American system therefore makes it much easier to mobilise co-ordinated responses across agencies and to call in agencies to respond to problems that the police have identified at beat meetings.

I will put things in a different way. Community policing in Chicago is the city's programme, not the police department's programme. All the city agencies play an important, co-ordinated role in responding to concerns that have been raised at beat meetings. Doing so has become a regular bureaucratic way of life for them. Forms that flow out of beat meetings drive the delivery of city services, and the mayor's office holds agencies accountable for their responsiveness to the problems that have been identified at police beat meetings.

Such an arrangement might be more difficult to implement elsewhere—I know that doing so is difficult in some countries that have different forms of organisation and in which the police have a different governance structure and cover different geographical areas. There may not be a mayor—who is an important and powerful figure in American politics—to co-ordinate agencies' responses. Delivering the goods and mobilising responses to an inevitably broad range of issues is one of the big challenges that you might face.

Paul Martin: From your evaluation of CAPS, how successful has it been in tackling neighbourhood problems, reducing crime and increasing public perceptions of safety?

Professor Skogan: Over the years, we have conducted various evaluations of the impact of CAPS. It is the big programme and it has many goals, so we have had to take many different approaches to gauge its outcomes. I will go through some of the approaches and say what we found.

The first thing that we considered was the extent of participation. Simply mobilising and involving citizens was a goal of the programme. Getting the community mobilised is a goal in Chicago—that is what everybody wants. So we looked at the extent of participation and turnout to see that it was sustained, broadly inclusive and that the people who got involved adequately represented the views of the community. I could talk for an hour and a half about that particular issue but, in short, we found high turnout, good community representation and good interest representation.

Secondly, we looked at the impact of the introduction of CAPS on public opinion by conducting a series of surveys over the years. Over time, we were able to engage in some little experiments in looking at places that had the programme and those that did not yet have it as it began to phase in across the city. Based on the measures that we used in our surveys, we found a 10 to 15 percentage point improvement in people's assessment of the quality of the police service. We asked questions about how responsive the police were to neighbourhood concerns and how effectively they were dealing with crime and various aspects of antisocial behaviour, which turns out to be very big when we do community policing. We found that the public's views became more positive by about 10 or 15 percentage points. Much of that increase came early, during the first six or seven years of the programme. Since 2000, it seems to have peaked and it is not

much higher than it was before. Importantly for Chicago, we found improvements in the perception of the police across the board in all three of the large racial communities—whites, African-Americans and Hispanics. It was important for the city that the programme was working to some extent in all its diverse neighbourhoods.

We also looked at the impact of the community policing strategies on neighbourhood crime problems. We did that in a variety of ways, one of which was an intensive case study of a random sample of neighbourhood problems. Another way was by tracking people's perceptions of crime problems in the surveys. A third way was to use service agency data that came out of the computers of some of the other big service agencies. The goal with that was to see how responsive they were being to the priorities that were raised by the public. Again, we found a pretty substantial pattern of success. In fact, in some ways, CAPS had its biggest success in dealing with graffiti, abandoned cars and buildings, and other physical aspects of the city that could be cleaned up by city services. Before CAPS started, it was thought that there were 10,000 abandoned cars on the streets of Chicago, so identifying and towing them in response to community concerns was a big priority. So we looked at the programme through looking at public opinion, problem solving and citizen involvement.

Finally, I looked statistically at crime rates to see what the impact of neighbourhood mobilisation and community policing was on levels of officially recorded crime. The decline in crime in Chicago that is attributable to the additional influence of community policing is about 15 per cent. About 85 per cent of the decline is due to other factors. So community policing is not the biggest factor, but it is noticeable in explaining why crime has been declining in Chicago since the middle of the 1990s.

Paul Martin: Professor, that was more than comprehensive. I have no other questions.

Margaret Smith: Good morning, professor. It is interesting that CAPS has successfully involved the different ethnic groups in the city. What particular challenges did communities face in their involvement with CAPS? You suggested that, over time, changes had been made to the way in which community engagement was done. Could you give us some more information on that?

Professor Skogan: Certainly. I will speak to the three great communities, each of which presents its own challenges.

Over the long haul, Chicago's Hispanic community is going to be the most important challenge that the city faces. Chicago has experienced a huge flood of immigration. The thought that cold, dark, windy Chicago, way up there in the north by the great lakes, is on the way to becoming a majority Latino city by 2020 is an astonishing feature of American life. The Latino community is the only group that is growing, partly through immigration and partly through internal growth, and because it is young and is having lots of kids, it is growing rapidly. Language has been a big problem. Finding officers who can speak Spanish, recruiting Spanish language trainers for officers and training officers in cultural awareness—all those things have been challenging for the police department. Finding ways to incorporate the Latino community into the participation parts of the programme has been difficult.

Community policing interfaces in a contradictory way with immigration enforcement. As you may know, in our country there is immense pressure from the federal Government to get local police involved in the enforcement of immigration laws. However, many American cities have resisted—some stoutly—getting involved in the federal agenda. That can happen because we are so decentralised. The federal Government can say one thing and the local police chief can say, "Not here—we don't do that." So far, Chicago is one place where people have said, "Not here—we don't do that." There is a very restrictive executive order by the mayor guiding the extent to which the police can look into the immigration status of people whom they detain. In fact, the order applies across the board to all city agencies including the schools, health care systems and everything else. Nevertheless, in heavily concentrated Latino neighbourhoods, substantial concerns have arisen from people confusing the local police with immigration enforcement authorities.

So, language and immigration are key concerns with respect to the Latino community. There are also the cultural expectations that people bring with them when they come from other countries. People from Mexico, primarily, who come to the United States expect the police to be corrupt, brutal, indifferent and very much the tool of their political masters. They are completely cynical about what the police are and what they do, and they have very low expectations of them. That cultural expectation that they bring with them when they come north has played a big role in inhibiting their getting involved in many aspects of city life. It is simply a truth that they come with a bad attitude, as one of my police friends would put it. I would describe it as a cultural expectation.

So, Latinos experience problems because of language, immigration and cultural expectations. They also face poverty—they are poor. They have the least education and the lowest-paid jobs, and they live in the worst housing in the city. Times are tough for them.

African-Americans, who make up the single biggest group in Chicago, have a quite different set of concerns. They have been here for a long time. The last big wave of immigration from the American south happened during the second world war and, since then, the level of such immigration has fallen to zero. So, the African-American community is stable and is no longer growing—in fact, it is shrinking a little and is getting older. Historically, African-Americans have had very bad relationships with the police. I can generate maps of police shootings of residents, residents' shootings of the police and complaints of police misconduct that show such incidents heavily concentrated in African-American neighbourhoods. Overcoming that historical tension was one of the challenges that CAPS faced when it first came along.

The other big group in Chicago is the ethnic white population, which comes from a variety of backgrounds. The biggest groups are Germans, Irish and English—there are not many Scots, I am afraid. There is also a significant number of Italians. Their immigration happened generations ago and, by and large, they like the police. Before the programme started, they were very supportive of the police. Their crime problems are relatively small, and their fear of crime is relatively low—they live in the best parts of the town. If all of Chicago looked like Chicago's white population, we would not be doing community policing—we would not need to do it. They are quite satisfied, thank you. So, finding ways of incorporating them is an interesting story. They have a very different set of concerns and perspectives from those of the other two groups.

15:30

Margaret Smith: You have discussed some of the cultural issues that needed to be overcome—issues relating to language and the cultural awareness of officers and others. Obviously, that involved developing a recruitment strategy that enabled you to deal with diversity issues. Your comments on those issues and on the programme as a whole suggest that this was a resource-intensive operation and that significant costs were involved. Is that a fair assessment? Has the programme survived changes over time in the political environment in Chicago?

Professor Skogan: The cost of the programme and who pays for it is an interesting issue. Chicago's programme is not much more expensive than others. We should recall that the beat officers' role is simply to respond to calls, except when they take off to go to beat meetings and to engage in other projects. About 70 per cent of officers' time is spent answering calls, so they are doing the work that needs to be done. Some overtime expenses are involved, because officers who are off shift—members of the beat team who are not working at the time of beat meetings—get paid overtime to attend beat meetings. Although meetings are held at 6.30 or 7 in the evening, the police want officers from the day shift and the midnight shift to attend to represent the problems that arise at other times of the day. Conducting the meetings involves some minor expenses. However, providing some paper so that agendas can be handed out at beat meetings is a small price to pay, given that Chicago Police Department's budget is $1.1 billion.

Other city agencies find that they have to meet some of the costs of the programme, because they must be responsive to requests—for special garbage pick-up, towing abandoned cars and painting out graffiti—that intrude on their ordinary bureaucratic routine. They grumble, but they meet the costs of those services. A significant part of the programme does not appear in the police department's budget, so it does not bother the department. I would not exaggerate the resource intensiveness of the programme. It does not involve special ring-fenced units or taking people away from the important routines of police work most of the time. Its resource demands are relatively limited.

Margaret Smith: In our communities we face the issue of abstraction. Often community police officers are taken away from areas because they must appear in court or help to police events such as marches and football matches. Are beat officers protected as much as possible from abstraction?

Professor Skogan: Their job is to answer 911 calls, so if they are abstracted someone else must be put in place to do that. The programme's designers ensured that beat team officers would spend about 70 per cent of their time answering calls. It is difficult to abstract them, because then someone else must deal with the calls. Abstraction has turned out not to be much of a problem.

There continues to be monitoring of the extent to which beat teams are sticking to their beats and taking beat calls. By and large, teams are spending about 70 per cent of their time on their beats—answering 911 calls, driving to crime scenes, filling out reports, talking to the public, finding witnesses and interviewing people. Those are the ordinary routines of police work. Because beat teams are not special units—no one in Chicago is called a community policing officer—abstraction has not been an organisational problem. That was the programme designers' goal. They saw that in other cities community policing units were decimated by being turned over to other duties, and they were determined to devise a structure that prevented that from

happening. The way to do that was to root officers' work in the ordinary daily routines of policing, so that what they are doing has to be done.

The Convener: The major abstractions of officers in Scotland are to police football matches and other large sporting events and marches and their aftermath. Who funds the policing of baseball or football grounds in Chicago?

Professor Skogan: The handling by police officers of traffic and general security—I emphasise "general", because police officers do not take tickets or guard the doors—is always an overtime assignment, for which the officers get extra pay. The cost is always met by the consumer of the product. Our football team has a contract with city government and pays for the officer hours, supervisory hours and administrative overheads for assignments such as providing general security on the football ground, directing and controlling traffic or providing an emergency van with communication equipment—all that is part of the contract.

That is true of other institutions. Chicago has the second biggest mass transit system in the United States after New York City. We have extensive subways and elevated railways, as well as buses. Transit policing is provided by the police department, but there is a contract with the transit agency, which pays. Likewise, the airport has a contract for the police service that it gets. The public housing agency, which is separately funded and runs substantial public housing developments, pays the costs of the public housing unit police who are provided by the police department. We have one policing provider in Chicago, but through contracts for regular policing or contracts for overtime policing the consumer pays for the policing of transit, public housing and sporting and other big projects.

The Convener: Bill Butler will ask about the broader challenges of community policing.

Bill Butler: Concern is often expressed that community policing is not part of core policing and police performance management indicators do not fully acknowledge the breadth of community policing activity. Is such concern justified? If so, how should it be addressed?

Professor Skogan: Your analysis is 100 per cent accurate. There are many movements and innovations in policing, but they do not always add up or correspond to one another. I have witnessed significant clashes between community policing and what are most broadly called management accountability processes—systems such as New York City's compstat or your extensive system of commissions, bureaus, auditors and improvers, which oversee the operation of local policing, sometimes even down to the basic command area. Such things do not always work in tandem. For years I have been kvetching—as we say in Chicago—about the need to find ways of developing and including in management information systems more information that is relevant to the effective application of community policing.

Chicago has introduced some measures in its management accountability reviews—what I will call its compstat meetings. I will tell you about measures that are used, although I must also tell you that by and large they become secondary to the traditional measures. For example, beat meeting attendance is measured—especially trends in attendance; if the trend is down the commander must have plans for getting it back up. There are measures of city services delivery. Are abandoned cars being towed? Are graffiti being painted up? Such problems are discussed and forms are filled out at beat meetings, and it is the job of the neighbourhood police to follow them up and ensure that the agencies deal with them. The paperwork flow to do with accountability for neighbourhood service delivery is also part of the process.

But that is pretty much it. Those are the kinds of quantitative indicators that the police have been able to extract from their systems. They use them in management reviews. However, we have to consider what those indicators come into conflict with. I am talking about issues such as clearing up crimes, seizing guns, and recovering stolen autos; about speed of response—how quickly the police get there; and about staying out of trouble relating to allegations of misconduct, charges against officers, and public complaints. What causes district commanders to get fired is public complaints, corruption and the ineffective delivery of traditional services. I have not known a police commander to be fired because his beat meeting trends were down. In the battle for the attention of top managers, it is almost inevitable that traditional accountability measures will overwhelm the limited and spartan measures that we have been able to assemble on the community policing side. That is a problem.

We have to keep reminding top managers—people who sit in police headquarters and never get out in the world—that civic engagement, public satisfaction and public participation are important; that support among the voters and taxpayers is important; and that those people love community policing. We have to keep reminding managers of the indicators that are not in their information systems. Those indicators tend to get driven out in management accountability computer systems.

Bill Butler: What evidence is there that some mechanisms are more successful than others in terms of community engagement and what accounts for the differences?

I would also like to hear your comments on a particular section in your very interesting paper. What is your view on group sponsorship of neighbourhood patrols?

Professor Skogan: Let me start with that second question, because it is very interesting. American cities are quite divided in terms of the kinds of autonomous citizen action that they can sponsor and be responsible for. A city at the opposite end of the spectrum to Chicago would be Fort Worth, Texas. Fort Worth is a very interesting town of about 600,000 people. It is a substantial place but it is very poor. The city and the police department are the active sponsors of a large and aggressive community patrol scheme. Private citizens' cars are scheduled, and what I would call giant refrigerator magnets are attached to the sides of the cars to say that they are part of a neighbourhood patrol. The magnets are slapped on the sides of the cars when they go out. The cars have a radio so that citizens can call in to the local police. The citizens wear distinctive orange jackets that say "Citizens on Patrol" on the back. That is all part of an official public programme, but it is at one end of the spectrum and not a lot of places do that kind of thing.

Chicago lies closer to the other end of the spectrum and there is no official endorsement of that kind of organised citizen patrol. Much of the reason for that has to do with liability. In our culture, if something goes wrong somebody is going to get sued—I would guess within 15 minutes. The city does not want legal liability for a lot of citizens whom it has not recruited and has not trained, and whom it is not supervising. That is a very big issue. Most police departments think like that: they are pretty wary of aggressive citizen patrols.

That said, there are many other things that the public can do besides patrolling. Chicago supports a lot of other things. For example, the city organises many Saturday morning neighbourhood clean-ups, in which the big targets are things such as graffiti. With the support of a city agency that shows up with paint and paint-brushes, neighbourhoods get out and they paint out graffiti and they paint and clean up the alleys. That kind of neighbourhood clean-up or paint-up is widely sponsored.

The city also sponsors what I would call globalisation events such as marches and rallies that have the theme of taking back the streets. Every Saturday morning in Chicago, the mayor leads a march somewhere in the city. Several hundred people will be on the mayor's march, because he has a staff that turns people out for him. That is all to do with mobilising the public and focusing their concerns on particular issues in their neighbourhoods.

15:45

Chicago holds a lot of marches and rallies—citywide and in the districts—but it has drawn the line at active citizen patrols with radios, special jackets and the like. Other cities have endorsed such activity. I do not know whether their model is more effective than ours, because I have evaluated only Chicago's approach. I have been to Fort Worth and have driven with the guys in their patrols, but that is a long way from doing a serious evaluation. I would describe Chicago's community mobilisation as modest and contained within the community policing framework. The marches are organised at the beat meetings and sometimes the beat meeting itself gets up and goes out and marches, but they do it within the context of the programme—they do not have a lot of other stuff going on.

Bill Butler: I take it that you prefer Chicago's approach. Is that because, at its extreme, there is a danger in Fort Worth's approach, for example, of vigilante groups emerging?

Professor Skogan: That is a possibility. I have not seen or heard of anything that I would describe as vigilante action in Fort Worth. In fact, the big goal there is to identify street drug-market activity and inform police units about it. Any sensible citizen in America does not intervene; our criminals are armed to the teeth and are very dangerous people, so it is best left to the professionals. The extent to which the bad guys carry guns in our country means that vigilante action will always be fairly restrained. Our citizen patrols are about calling in the professionals; they are not about engaging in vigilante activity. Once the ordinary police get involved, they are bound by the constitution—they have been trained in the laws of the state of Illinois—as they are under any circumstance.

I have not seen in practice that vigilantism is an important issue. I read in the papers about rural areas where vigilantism associated with immigration politics is an issue, but it is not a problem in my city or, I think, in other big American cities. I understand your concern, but because of the laws and because the bad guys are typically pretty well armed, Americans have not taken vigilante action in a long time.

The Convener: You have given us comprehensive answers and have probably given us more or less all the information that we need. Are there any other questions?

Cathie Craigie: I echo the convener's remarks, Professor Skogan. Your answers have been informative and detailed.

What support is provided to communities to articulate their policing needs? You mentioned the need for partnership working and explained how

the beat meetings take place, but what has been the key ingredient that makes the partnership effective?

Professor Skogan: That is a very good question. I have not discussed one very important aspect of the programme, which is that the beat meetings and the public participation in marches, rallies and Saturday morning clean-up programmes do not happen accidentally. Another aspect of the programme is that there is a fairly large office staffed by a team of civilians, who are all community organisers and are experienced, professional people. When the office is fully staffed, there are about 85 of them. They are carried on the police department's budget, because that protects the office from other politicians, but they have a civilian director, who is a well-known former civil rights leader in Chicago. They are called the community mobilisation team and they go out, march, walk the streets and give out brochures. They also go to other meetings and encourage people to attend beat meetings. When there is going to be a march on a Saturday morning, they ensure that people turn out for the march and that marchers have posters to hold up. They support the clean-up programmes and see to it that the paint and brushes arrive and that somebody is out there to help get people mobilised on a Saturday morning. The staff of civilian organisers who push along public participation play an important part in the programme. Chicago is a big city; we have 3 million people so it takes a substantial amount of staff work to reach out, mobilise and push people forward. Financially, that part of the programme is not that expensive, especially when you are talking about a budget of $1.1 billion. Having an implementation office has been an important part of making the public side of the programme work as effectively as it has.

John Wilson: Professor Skogan, you said earlier that something like 15 per cent of the reduction in crime could be attributed to CAPS and that the other 85 per cent could be attributed elsewhere. To what can that 85 per cent reduction be attributed?

Professor Skogan: The huge decline in crime that has taken place since about 1991 is one of the great mysteries of the United States at the end of the 20th century. There was a sharp drop during the 1990s; the decline has now levelled off in Chicago, although it is still dropping a bit throughout the 2000s.

Like many other academics, I have tried to address the reasons for the decline. I can only speak for Chicago because all crime is local—all these guys are doing it in our neighbourhood so my statistical work has been confined to Chicago. I see three broad contributions to the crime decline. The first was increasing rates of incarceration, especially during the first two thirds of the 1990s. From 1991 through 1996 or 1997, there was a big run-up in the level of incarceration of people from Chicago in our county and state prisons. Nationwide, incarceration accounts for about 25 per cent of the total crime decline; I have no reason to think that that was not as effective in Chicago and, statistically, I see about the same level of decline.

From the late 1990s into the 2000s, we had large-scale mobilisation around community policing. I find that an independent contribution of citizen involvement plus my measures of the effectiveness of the programme in the different areas account for a chunk of decline from 1996 through 2002 or 2003.

In addition, starting in about 2003, Chicago began to adopt what I would call smart policing strategies that had been proved elsewhere but which were slow to come to Chicago. The strategies adopted the kind of management accountability in monitoring and supervision that I talked about. They started using computers to analyse hotspots, to focus concentrated policing on those hotspots and a whole variety of things that other cities had moved towards more quickly but which did not come to Chicago until the 2000s. In the 2000s, those measures also contributed to the decline in crime in Chicago.

So the three broad trends of smarter policing, community policing and incarceration account for much, but not all, of the decline—there are still huge mysteries involved in that decline. However, those trends account for a significant proportion of the decline in crime in Chicago at that time.

John Wilson: Thank you, professor. You also said that the drive behind the programme came from the mayor's office. What would the reaction be if there was either a change of mayor or a political change between the neighbourhoods and the police?

Professor Skogan: That is hard to say. We have had a mayor Daley in office since 1953 and our current Daley shows no signs of leaving, so I have no experience of mayoral transition. However, I know that mayoral transition has created big problems in other cities. In Seattle, when a new mayor came in with a new set of priorities, he got rid of his old chief and went in another direction. I could name other cities too.

I am now on my fourth chief superintendent. Each of them has come in responsive to the city's agenda and, in their own way, has continued to support the programme and see to it that it functions. Some were more enthusiastic than others, and some had other priorities that they wanted to focus on. In the end, the big strength for

Chicago's programme is that it is the city's programme, not the police department's. Police chiefs have come and gone, and the programme has remained pretty much the same because it is so firmly rooted in the city's culture and neighbourhoods. The information systems support it, the services are co-ordinated around it and the public attends in huge numbers. The politically inclined public loves it. It will not go away any time soon. It is pretty much built into the civic culture of Chicago that this is the way that we do things. As you say, some day, perhaps after the next Olympics—which Chicago desperately hopes to attract—we might see a new mayor, and then we will have a true test. We have not seen such a test yet.

The Convener: If there are no further questions, I thank you for giving evidence. I heard a lecture that you gave some months ago in Edinburgh. I was sufficiently impressed to think that the committee would derive a lot of benefit from having evidence from you—that has proved to be the case. We could learn quite a lot from Chicago, although perhaps not on the issue of political and civic nepotism. The figures on crime are most impressive. We are very much obliged to you for giving your time. No doubt we shall hear from you again.

Professor Skogan: Thank you for your thoughtful questions.

15:56

Meeting suspended.

15:59

On resuming—

The Convener: Our final visitors are Dr Daniel Donnelly, of the Scottish centre for police studies, who gave evidence at the earlier stage of our policing inquiry, and Alistair Henry, who is a lecturer in criminology at the University of Edinburgh.

The first question, regarding definitions and contexts, will be asked by Stuart McMillan.

Stuart McMillan: How would you define community policing and what are its key features? Why is community policing viewed as a necessary feature of contemporary policing strategies?

Dr Daniel Donnelly (University of Paisley): Traditionally—that is, since the 1980s—community policing has been looked at as an opportunity for members of the public to participate in policing, influence policing in their area and gain a feeling that their problems are being listened to and their questions are being answered by the local police. In recent years, the definition of community policing has become broader. In the past few decades, the iconic patrol officer would have been viewed as the centre of community policing. Recently, however, there have been more players in the wide world of community policing. The private sector plays a part, as do closed-circuit television systems, local authorities and their agencies, community wardens and the voluntary sector. More important, within the police organisation, there are many, many more individuals—civilian police staff, detective officers, analysts and a wide array of others in the background—who play an important role in modern-day community policing.

If you asked other people for a definition of community policing, you would get a different response from each person. The situation is dynamic in the 21st century. Suffice it to say that community policing requires the adoption of a different mindset by the police organisation, communities and central and local politicians.

The police realise that there has to be a regular interface with communities, and that, for the police to be successful, they require the involvement and support of communities. One of the ways of ensuring that that happens is to develop trust, and one of the ways of developing trust is to have a regular communication system whereby the police can meet the community on the street and in a wide array of forums, such as community councils and residents associations.

Modern policing requires the community to give information to the police. Different types of intelligence are required, such as community intelligence and criminal intelligence. The community must be willing to contact the police when things go wrong and when crimes take place, and people must be willing to give witness statements and go to court at some point in the future to give evidence to support the police side of investigations.

We could spend hours articulating different definitions and ways of looking at community policing, but at its core there is a regular interface between the police, other agencies and the community. That ensures that the police organisation understands and regularly tackles the community's problems and concerns, which might not always be to do with crime. Certainly, the police organisation should at least be in a position to have a flow of information from the community.

Alistair Henry (University of Edinburgh): I would reiterate much of what Dr Donnelly has said, but I also make the point that the definitions of community policing have been notoriously vague and varied—that may be one reason for the committee's interest in the issue. Often, the definitions have been aspirational and have simply reflected how people, including police officers,