



Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Reform of the Police Federation, HC 1163

1 April 2014

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Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Metropolitan Police Federation](#)
- [West Midlands Police Federation](#)

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Members present: Keith Vaz (Chair), Ian Austin, Nicola Blackwood, Mr James Clappison, Michael Ellis, Dr Julian Huppert, Mark Reckless, Mr David Winnick.

Questions 1-129

Witness: **Fiona McElroy**, former Head of Communications, Police Federation, gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: Ms McElroy, my sincere apologies for keeping you waiting so long. There is nothing worse than having to sit through an evidence session unrelated to what we are going to ask you about.

Fiona McElroy: No problem.

Chair: Just to set the background, the Select Committee is conducting an inquiry into the Police Federation, a short inquiry, which we hope to report on in mid-May. We have read what you have had to say in the press and the public domain about your time at the Federation. Why did you leave the Federation?

Fiona McElroy: I was dismissed from the Police Federation and I think it is fair to say that I was puzzled about why that was. The position that was set out to me by the general secretary in writing after the event was that I had placed the chairman in an invidious position, which I personally disagreed with. It is important to set out the context of how we had led to that position. Two weeks previously the independent review had been published.

Q2 Chair: This is the Normington review?

Fiona McElroy: This was the Normington review, which was a momentous report that set out a sea change for the organisation. Personally for me and professionally I felt it was an

incredibly exciting challenge, but I think it is fair to say that the fallout within the organisation was fairly dramatic. My own personal view of that was because the initial response was essentially what does this mean for me as an individual rather than the focus being on what does this mean for the organisation and its future.

On that basis, within the week that followed there was a lot of anger. There was a lot of heated discussion. As a result of that, I had reached a position myself on the Friday before I was dismissed where I had informed the chairman and the head of human resources that I felt my position had become untenable in that anything that I tried to do, lead the team or to help bring solutions, I was under personal attack. It is fair to say as well at that stage the chairman also felt like he was under attack. Now, I have written to—

Q3 Chair: This is Steve Williams?

Fiona McElroy: This was Steve Williams, and he is the person that I reported to.

Q4 Chair: Of course. Could I stop you there? I think what you have had to say is very helpful and will set the context of why we have you here. What we are more interested in for the purpose of the session today is your views on the Federation and the culture that exists there and rooms for improvement. You presumably supported—if you could support because you were an employee—the decision of Steve Williams to have an inquiry in the first place. That itself has attracted a lot of controversy. Were you glad there was the Normington report? Do you think it was helpful to have such a report?

Fiona McElroy: Well, that was before my time when the review was instigated. I think it is fair to say when I took the job up in November I was coming into an organisation that had a tainted reputation, but it was also clear to me as a communications professional that this was an organisation that had a huge mandate from its membership base and also to the public, which is a very important point, to be the voice of policing. External stakeholders were very clear on that point that in terms of particularly the issue of confidence in policing there was an appetite to hear from the rank and file members of the police.

The issue that I had, the challenge, was in trying to serve as a corporate function to meet the needs of the organisation it is very difficult when there is a very clear split in the leadership of the organisation about what the priority is. It is fair to say that there were some that believed that the independent review was an absolute priority for delivery and there were others who did not.

Q5 Chair: You talked about acts of bullying, inappropriate behaviour and attitudes in the press, which concerned this Committee because obviously this is the Police Federation. Therefore, we would expect it not to have such attitudes. Why did you say those things? Were these things that happened to you personally or did you witness them happening?

Fiona McElroy: Both. My background as a civil servant is that I am used to being the adviser, the official who puts forward recommendations, and it is for decision makers to act upon it. The fact that the statement was even in the public domain was a position that I

was pushed into. It was not a position that I wished to take, but I felt that I had to, in order to protect my reputation, just set out some of those issues.

On the bullying and inappropriate behaviour, forgive me, what I did not get to say earlier was that the weekend before I was dismissed the chairman had got in touch with me and was considering his own position and asked me to help him in how to move in that way. He felt he had no option—

Q6 Chair: Sorry, you are telling this Committee that Steve Williams, the chairman of the Federation, had contacted you before the publication of the Normington report?

Fiona McElroy: No, before I was dismissed.

Chair: Before you were dismissed.

Fiona McElroy: After the publication of the review.

Chair: After the publication, that he was considering his position as to whether or not to resign?

Fiona McElroy: Yes.

Q7 Chair: Did he say why?

Fiona McElroy: He had written a letter and he asked for my help with what to do. The principle of my advice to him was that there might be some middle ground rather than taking such a radical step in that it appeared the joint central committee, which is the decision-making body nationally, there was a very vocal group within that and it was to reassure him that throughout the country there was an appetite for change. The survey of members said quite clearly there was 91% of those members wanted change. Therefore, that had to be acknowledged and, as a result, what he needed was the authority to deliver it. Rather than resign was perhaps draft a letter, give it to the joint central committee and make clear to them that he needed a vote of confidence in order to move forward, otherwise he would resign. If I could just refer to one aspect of the letter that he put in himself—

Q8 Chair: This is a letter to whom?

Fiona McElroy: This was the letter he drafted to give to the JCC.

Q9 Chair: The planned letter that was never given?

Fiona McElroy: The planned letter, yes.

Q10 Chair: Was it given or not given in the end?

Fiona McElroy: It was shared internally but it was not formally given over for a vote of confidence.

Q11 Chair: Okay. It would be helpful, since you are referring to it, if you could send it to the Committee.

Fiona McElroy: I will, of course. One of the key lines that he put in there was that he had personally been continually criticised, ridiculed, verbally attacked and bullied.

Chair: He, the chairman, had been bullied?

Fiona McElroy: He, the chairman. That is in the space of 12 months since he had instigated the review itself.

Q12 Chair: All right. You were the head of communications. You worked at the Attorney-General's Department. I am not sure whether our paths crossed when I was there many years ago; probably not, you look far too young to have been there.

Fiona McElroy: I do not think so.

Chair: Describe it in a few sentences. What would you describe? If you were explaining to the Committee what the Federation was like, given what you have said to us, how would you describe this organisation?

Fiona McElroy: The potential of the organisation is fantastic and I absolutely must put on record that although I never got to go out to the regions, some of the regional representatives that I got to speak to do fantastic work. I think the great shame of all of this is that that is not made known, it has clearly not been able to be shared and it is overshadowed by these other internal politics.

Q13 Chair: But the reality?

Fiona McElroy: But the reality being that I knew the reputation was damaged but what I had not anticipated was that pretty much every aspect of the national outfit was broken. There was no process. There was no clear audit trail of decision making. There was no policy agreement or clear audit trail of policy. There was no strategic capacity. I think it is fair to say that unless there is a level of business acumen and process brought to the organisation it will find it very difficult. It is too inward facing.

Q14 Chair: Your deputy resigned with you, I understand?

Fiona McElroy: Two of my colleagues, yes.

Q15 Chair: Yes. Is it because it was an organisation that you could not sell to the public?

Fiona McElroy: Well, they would have to speak for themselves, but I think the reason they resigned was that we were very unified in terms of the advice that we were giving and they felt that given what had happened to me they could not continue.

Q16 Chair: Have you now found employment?

Fiona McElroy: Yes.

Chair: Good.

Q17 Michael Ellis: First, Ms McElroy, can I ask you: have you been threatened with any legal action in respect of perhaps anything you say to this Committee or anything that you have said since you have left?

Fiona McElroy: Three separate individuals have made me aware that that has been discussed, but have I formally been threatened? No.

Q18 Michael Ellis: Sorry, can I just establish what you mean by that? Three separate individuals have said that it has been discussed?

Fiona McElroy: Yes.

Q19 Michael Ellis: Were you effectively being told to be careful what you say to this Committee or to others?

Fiona McElroy: It is fair to say I am used to working in fairly robust situations, so I just noted it. I did not feel threatened.

Q20 Michael Ellis: You understood it to mean that legal action might ensue if you said something that the Police Federation did not like?

Fiona McElroy: I tend to deal in facts. I will wait until I am presented with a situation and I really have to consider it. It is very much a policy of the Federation. I think it has become something of a default position, in that they do not know how to deal with other situations and particularly with members, to maybe move in that way before they consider other options.

Q21 Michael Ellis: Right. Is it within your knowledge: did the Police Federation contract with this public relations company called Gaunt Brothers Limited?

Fiona McElroy: I believe they did, yes.

Q22 Michael Ellis: Was it part of that agreement—again only if it is within your knowledge—that guerrilla tactics would be used or a blitzkrieg or some form of attack to sabotage the Government?

Fiona McElroy: I should set out that that was before my time when the contract was in place. Was I aware of a contract? Yes, I was. That had been put in place and the reason I came across it was when I joined the organisation I was trying to understand where the risks were for the reputation of the organisation and I was made aware of the contract.

Q23 Michael Ellis: You were made aware of it. I understand it was undertaken before you started, but you were made aware of it?

Fiona McElroy: Yes.

Q24 Michael Ellis: Was that your understanding of what the contract contained?

Fiona McElroy: Yes.

Q25 Michael Ellis: That there would be guerrilla tactics and a blitzkrieg?

Fiona McElroy: Guerrilla tactics I recognised as a phrase within it, yes.

Q26 Michael Ellis: What work were they supposed to undertake, this PR company? What work were they actually supposed to undertake?

Fiona McElroy: Above and beyond that I cannot really say, to be honest. I was shown the document once for a few minutes. I never received a copy of it, and so I was aware of it, that was about it.

Q27 Michael Ellis: Very well. Did you see how much money was the consideration for this contract?

Fiona McElroy: I cannot recall, I have to say. If I could say one thing, I had made a note in my notebook of it and what I had written down was thousands of pounds, so I knew there was a considerable sum of money.

Q28 Michael Ellis: Per?

Fiona McElroy: I do not know. I cannot recall and it would be dishonest of me to try to say otherwise, I think.

Q29 Michael Ellis: I do not want to press you if you do not recall, but when you say “thousands of pounds” can you say whether it was below £10,000, above £10,000? Can you be a little bit more specific?

Fiona McElroy: It was more than £10,000 but I suspect that is a question probably for the Federation that they should answer.

Q30 Michael Ellis: Very well. I suspect you will not be able to answer this question, so please say so if you cannot. Do you know or have any knowledge of where this contract is or why it has not been disclosed to this Committee?

Fiona McElroy: No.

Q31 Michael Ellis: You have talked about the position as far as Steve Williams is concerned. You have reported that he felt that he was under attack as well. Could I ask you to elaborate on that? Under attack by whom?

Fiona McElroy: I think by his colleagues within the joint central committee.

Q32 Michael Ellis: Where did the idea come from within the Federation to launch these guerrilla tactics, do you know that?

Fiona McElroy: I don't. If I could maybe just roll back a little bit in understanding the context of where the independent review had come from, the way it was explained to me was that after the new Government came in there was quite clearly a reform of policing going on. There was an understanding and an acceptance that the Police Federation needed to look at itself. I suspect it was somewhere in the middle of all of that.

Q33 Chair: Thank you, Mr Ellis, very helpful. Can I just ask you about financial accountability? Do you know anything about any of the No. 2 accounts?

Fiona McElroy: Yes.

Q34 Chair: You do. What can you tell this Committee?

Fiona McElroy: It was clear that the independent review was going to touch on the finances as part of its recommendations. Again, within the discussion around that, it was to look at where the risks are, where the opportunities are. I should point out given—

Q35 Chair: Rather than talk about the Normington report, which we will, of course, go into, do you know about the No. 2 accounts? These are the accounts held in the regions.

Fiona McElroy: Yes. I asked a lot of questions about them because I did not understand. The main point that I made was that this is all about the questions, not so much the answers. If you do not have the answers, then you have to put steps in motion to get those bits of information.

Q36 Chair: You were preparing lines to take based on the report?

Fiona McElroy: Well, it became more than that, to be fair, because the first question was: how much money is there? The answer was, "I don't know" from right across the board. It is right and proper to say that essentially you have 47 different bits of the Federation; they do not join up. For me, here you have serving police officers who are working for the

Police Federation so there is an even higher bar there of understanding. My question was—

Q37 Chair: Are you telling the Committee that the central committee did not know how much money was in these No. 2 accounts?

Fiona McElroy: Yes, and they are on the record for saying that, yes.

Q38 Chair: Yes, and you did not know and nobody knew?

Fiona McElroy: No.

Q39 Chair: Except for people in the regions, presumably?

Fiona McElroy: Well, they all knew of their own accounts, I think it is fair to say.

Chair: Thank you.

Q40 Mr Winnick: In all, am I not correct, you would have been in the position of head of communications at the Police Federation for a maximum of three months?

Fiona McElroy: Ten weeks I think it was, yes.

Q41 Mr Winnick: Ten weeks. During that ten weeks, when would you say incidents occurred that caused you disquiet? Was it in the first month or six weeks?

Fiona McElroy: Yes, right from the start, I think, yes.

Q42 Mr Winnick: Those sorts of incidents that caused, to use the word I used a moment ago, disquiet, harassment or bullying, is that what you are telling us?

Fiona McElroy: One of the questions I was asked was what did I mean by inappropriate behaviour. If I could set it out to you like this, it is trying to have a professional discussion about a matter of business, to either have a nil return when quite clearly the pressure is on me to solve that, and then for the individual concerned to feel it is appropriate at 10 o'clock at night after a considerable amount of alcohol is consumed to embark upon a very public and quite aggressive conversation with me. In saying that, I have quite broad shoulders but that, for me, is inappropriate. It is inappropriate for me and it is inappropriate for more junior members of staff, who are quite clearly fearful for their jobs and do not feel they have a voice to be able to stand up and say that this is not the right way to do business. In some instances, I did feel on their behalf and myself to point out that that is not how matters should be resolved.

Q43 Mr Winnick: It was clearly an unhappy work situation?

Fiona McElroy: Yes.

Q44 Mr Winnick: Bullying and harassment are unfortunate, to say the least, and should be pursued, obviously, but would you say there was anything there taking place that was illegal, which was anywhere near criminal action?

Fiona McElroy: Well, in relation to the No. 2 accounts this was one of the points that I raised. If you do not know how much money you have, how do you know it is held in the appropriate manner? If you do not know it is held in the appropriate manner, how do you know that it is not unlawfully held? I believe in the regional accounts the money should be held in trust. Therefore, the Trustees Act would apply, not just the Police Federation fund rules. I advised them to seek a legal opinion and when the legal opinion came back it was quite clear that the money was not being held certainly according to the Police Federation rules. The Police Federation rules changed in 2007, which said all money that was raised in the name of the Police Federation was Federation funds; therefore, should be audited accordingly, should be shared with all chief constables, should all be shared with Federation headquarters, and should be made available to the Home Secretary. That had not been happening since 2007.

Q45 Mr Winnick: Would that not come within the description—I do not want to put words into your mouth, of course—of being an internal matter where branches of the Police Federation at their various conferences and the rest could pursue the issue? It would not be a matter for outside—

Fiona McElroy: Potentially, yes, but if you take the step further, if you cannot answer those questions how do you know that someone is not attempting to fraudulently use that money? The worst case scenario that I set out is if you do not take steps to uncover this information, what would you do if an allegation is made and you potentially end up with a police investigation? I have worked in the charity sector before where that has occurred. Either you are unwilling or unable to explain and that is sometimes a step that can move quite quickly, so it seemed sensible for the organisation to try to address that to ensure that that was not a step that maybe was hastily arrived at.

Q46 Mr Winnick: One more question. Arising from what you have already been asked and the question of tactics used by the Police Federation, controversial or not, in opposing what is described as reforms of police pay or police cuts, would you accept that the Police Federation have a legitimate role in opposing measures, whichever Government happens to be in office, which they consider to be to the disadvantage of the police? Would you accept that that is part of the function of the Police Federation?

Fiona McElroy: Personally, no, and I think it is rather short-sighted. There is a huge campaigning role that the Police Federation can do, but there is this inherent need to lock horns and fight. One of the things that I tried to say to them was there are much more sophisticated ways that you can engage in debate and set the scene for discussion without making it look like it is personal or aggressive or hostile and still achieve the same aims. Unfortunately, I did not get to take any of those ideas further forward.

Q47 Mr Winnick: Yes, but they have a right to campaign?

Fiona McElroy: Absolutely.

Q48 Mr Winnick: You accept that entirely?

Fiona McElroy: Yes.

Q49 Mr Winnick: Of course, what tactics are used can be controversial as, indeed, it appears to be but—

Fiona McElroy: Well, that is why I would have to draw my own personal and professional conclusions if that was something I would subscribe to.

Q50 Dr Huppert: Can I first follow up on the question that Mr Winnick asked? You have spoken about the No. 2 accounts. Leaving that aside for a minute, did you see or were you made aware of any things that you thought might be criminal actions of any kind?

Fiona McElroy: No, I cannot say that I was.

Q51 Dr Huppert: Okay. I think that is quite helpful. You said there is a clear role for the Federation. What would your advice be on what the Federation ought to do next? Where should they go?

Fiona McElroy: I think they need to embrace the independent review and take it forward. There is a clear appetite in the country, out in the regions, to move forward and be progressive in its thinking. Until bad faith tactics of, “This is the rule and this is what we must do” fall away and they start to listen to one another, one of the first things should be that the regional body moves forward as a decision-making body as soon as possible. I do not think that needs to wait the three years of the delivery programme for that to happen.

Q52 Nicola Blackwood: Ms McElroy, you said earlier to my colleague that three individuals had come to you and made comments about your evidence. Then you moved quite quickly on to how you reacted to that. I wondered who exactly had come to talk to you about your evidence. Was it members of the Police Federation?

Fiona McElroy: They were just people who felt they should make me aware of it. I would prefer not to reveal who those people were. I have worked as a journalist before, so in terms of sourcing information I was quite confident that what they were telling me was true.

Q53 Chair: Ms McElroy, this is not a newspaper here.

Fiona McElroy: I appreciate that.

Chair: Mr Ellis was right to raise this. If anyone threatens any member who is coming to give evidence to a Select Committee of the House of Commons it is a contempt. We do not want you to name them if you feel uncomfortable, but I think Ms Blackwood has asked a quite general question. It could have been someone you met on the Tube, but she has asked you specifically were they members of the Police Federation. I think it is reasonable to answer that because we are concerned. We may take further action.

Fiona McElroy: Well, I think I could say that not all were but some were. Two were, but one was not.

Q54 Nicola Blackwood: Do you think that they were acting with authority or were they acting in their own capacity?

Fiona McElroy: The reason it was mentioned to me was just to make me aware. I did not feel threatened by it, like they were telling me on the basis that I should not be open and honest.

Q55 Nicola Blackwood: Okay. There is, I think, in most people's minds a distinction between bullying behaviour and inappropriate behaviour. You have obviously answered Mr Winnick with an example of inappropriate behaviour, but you have commented that you think that you were subjected to bullying while you were working for the Police Federation and also that obviously the chairman wrote the same in his letter of resignation, which was not submitted. I wonder if you could give the Committee some examples of bullying behaviour that you observed or personally experienced.

Fiona McElroy: I do not believe that I was personally bullied, but I believe a member of my staff was and I had cause to intervene on that. They were sent a personally abusive email at 11.20 on a Friday night on a piece of work that they had submitted rather than come to me as their manager. The next part of that conversation was, "Get them in here to this office and I'm going to sack them". Here you have an individual who has no way to defend themselves in any way when an assumption is already made that the only option is to sack them.

Q56 Nicola Blackwood: Okay. This was an ongoing campaign of bullying, was it, or were these individual incidents?

Fiona McElroy: They were individual incidents. It is difficult for me to speak on behalf of other people, but I was aware of several senior people who had come to me about different interactions that they had with others in case it had become public knowledge, where there was a threat of a physical interaction for want of a better description.

Q57 Nicola Blackwood: Did you ever observe any physical bullying?

Fiona McElroy: Not that, no.

Nicola Blackwood: No, okay. All right, thank you.

Chair: Mr Ellis has a quick supplementary.

Q58 Michael Ellis: Could I just go back a step, please, on the financial accountability issue? Are you aware of the corporate Mastercard credit card usage? Did you see any bills during your time there that were clocked up by the Mastercard credit card use, or whatever credit card company it was?

Fiona McElroy: Yes, they had credit cards. Indeed, I was issued with a credit card not long before I left as a head of the unit should I need to use it. Yes, I saw them used. I knew that there was a culture. The issue for me was I was never the moral conscience of the Police Federation, but what I did say was if you do not have any policy in place to give guidance on how to use such a facility, then it is very hard to complain after it is abused.

Q59 Michael Ellis: Do you think it was abused?

Fiona McElroy: Yes.

Q60 Michael Ellis: Do you think that because you saw it being abused?

Fiona McElroy: No, I was privy to formal discussions afterwards about events where—

Q61 Michael Ellis: Can you give an example of such an event where you think these credit cards were being abused?

Fiona McElroy: Well, there was a discussion at one of the joint central committee meetings of what was described as a statutory meeting, where the federations from England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland come together, and rather large bar bills were run up.

Q62 Michael Ellis: Can you give a rough figure as to how much the bar bills were?

Fiona McElroy: Some were £300 or £400.

Q63 Chair: For how many people?

Fiona McElroy: That I could not be—

Chair: If there were 400 people there, then obviously—

Fiona McElroy: No, there were not 400 people there. Well, the joint central committee is 30.

Q64 Michael Ellis: Any other examples that you can think of that came to your attention that you considered to be abuse?

Fiona McElroy: Well, it was not so much my view that it was abuse. I was made aware of some uses of it that had been deemed controversial or should not have happened. Given that the commitment was made on the credit card, they were paid. For example, there is this acceptance that as serving police officers Federation representatives are entitled to their meals and accommodation on their travel. Do you interpret a lunch as a sandwich and a cup of coffee or do you interpret that as a rather posh restaurant with two bottles of wine for £250 or £300? That is a judgment and that was one of the things I said. Rather than me express a view on whether it was right or wrong, it was you have to come to a judgment about whether that is acceptable or not.

Q65 Michael Ellis: You saw such examples, did you, of the lunches?

Fiona McElroy: I was never privy to such a lunch, if that is what you mean, but in terms of—

Michael Ellis: But you saw such bills?

Fiona McElroy: Yes.

Q66 Chair: Ms McElroy, thank you for coming in. We know this must have been difficult for you. We appreciate it and if there is any information that has been raised by members that you wish to follow up, please would you write to us?

Fiona McElroy: I will.

Chair: Thank you very much for coming in.

Fiona McElroy: Okay, thank you very much.

Chair: If anyone contacts you after this event in any way that you find threatening or bullying as a result of what you have said, please contact me immediately.

Fiona McElroy: Thank you, I will.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **John Tully**, Metropolitan Police Federation, and **Ian Edwards**, West Midlands Police Federation, gave evidence.

Q67 Chair: Thank you very much for giving evidence to this Committee. Mr Tully, you have been here before on another occasion. I am not sure whether, Mr Edwards, you have been here.

Ian Edwards: No, I have not.

Chair: Thank you for coming. The context of this session is to look at the Police Federation and to produce a report on the back of the Normington report. The reason why we have asked you to come in, obviously, Mr Tully, you represent the Met with its huge size in respect of the Federation; Mr Edwards, you represent an out of London force. We are keen to know processes, not to point fingers or blame, but just to know processes to make it easier for us to understand. I want to start with financial issues, and other colleagues will come in, and then we will go on to representation. I am afraid I have to leave before the session is concluded. Mr Reckless will take the chair when I go. I am sorry about that; it has run on slightly longer than we anticipated and I am grateful to you for your forbearance. If I could start with you, Mr Edwards, you have as the chairman of the West Midlands Police Federation a No. 2 account, an account where your members' subscriptions go into, is that correct?

Ian Edwards: No, we do not.

Q68 Chair: You do not. The West Midlands Police have no control over any financial matters?

Ian Edwards: West Midlands Police do not, no. The Federation do. All our money goes—

Chair: The Federation?

Ian Edwards: Yes, sorry.

Q69 Chair: You are here as the Federation, not as the police?

Ian Edwards: Yes, absolutely. All our money goes into what—

Chair: My apologies, the Federation.

Ian Edwards: That is okay. All our money goes into one account, from member services, Federation subscriptions, and that also includes the chief constable's charity account. We run a chief constable's charity.

Q70 Chair: You as chairman are one of the signatories of this Federation account of the West Midlands?

Ian Edwards: Yes, I am.

Q71 Chair: How much would you have in there?

Ian Edwards: I can give you the exact figures if you bear with me. The net assets as of 2013, the buildings and equipment—we have a share of the building that we share with the credit union and healthcare—is £728,000 in value. That is the building, computers and everything contained in with the building. In our investment account we have £1.395 million, which is invested with companies who look after our money. Cash £420,000; working capital £94,000, which I think is around £2.6 million in net assets.

Chair: £2.6 million?

Ian Edwards: Around that.

Q72 Chair: Were you surprised when you discovered that those sitting centrally in Leatherhead did not know how much money you had in your account? When we took evidence from Steve Williams it seems that you are not under an obligation to disclose that information to the Federation because you are a branch.

Ian Edwards: Yes, absolutely. Our accounts are audited every year. The F45 is completed. A copy does go to the chief and we send a copy to headquarters at Leatherhead. So, yes, I was surprised. Our accounts are done openly. They are transparent. There is nothing hidden there.

Q73 Chair: Does that go for other branches?

Ian Edwards: I can't comment for other branches.

Q74 Chair: You can't, but you can tell us that for the West Midlands?

Ian Edwards: I know my house is in order.

Q75 Chair: Indeed. Mr Tully, 27 years of service in the Metropolitan Police; you have obviously been one of the key figures in London. Would you like to tell us how much money you have in your account?

John Tully: Yes, Chairman, and I would just like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and explain what the actual position is rather than some of the media hype that we have heard recently. The accumulated fund of the Metropolitan Police Federation currently sits at £4,671,013.

Q76 Chair: Were you surprised again when reports were made that those sitting centrally in the Police Federation really did not know how much money was in these No. 2 accounts?

John Tully: I think it is very important to differentiate between where we sit and where some of my colleague chairs sit around the country. There are 43 independent federations as laid down in statute. The Metropolitan Police Federation does not have a No. 2 account. Like my colleague Ian Edwards from West Mids, everything is audited. We have independent trustees who ensure that all the fund rules are followed and our policies are kept to. We publish our accounts annually to our membership. I was surprised to hear that other parts of the Federation were less transparent than we are.

Q77 Chair: You accept some of the criticism? It may well be we picked the two best, if you like, to come and give evidence today, but there are other branches that do not provide the kind of transparency of information that everyone would like to see in any organisation, especially one relating to the police.

John Tully: Clearly, I cannot speak directly for the other federations you mention, but it is clear, if you believe what has been reported, that there are some federations who do have No. 2 accounts and have not disclosed that information.

Q78 Chair: Do you know which ones or do you do not know?

John Tully: I do not.

Q79 Chair: I was talking to one of the police officers on duty here and I said that you were coming in today. I asked about his subscriptions, where they went to, and he said obviously he had to pay these subscriptions but he did not know what the money was spent on. Now, it could well be the usual thing when you hand somebody a leaflet and you think they know what you are saying but actually they just put it away somewhere. Do you think that you have done enough in both your local branches to ensure that your local officers know exactly what happens to the money that they give to you?

Ian Edwards: No, I don't, and I think it is very important that we are transparent and accountable. I think that is down to communication. We do need to communicate with our members and say, "You pay your £20.58 monthly. You need to know where your money is going". We have just put on our website a breakdown, a narrative of our accounts, because a lot of people looking at our accounts would not understand where the money goes. It is important to break it down so people do know where their money is spent locally and nationally.

Q80 Chair: As far, Mr Tully, as additional member services are concerned, such as insurance, why have so many branches decided to sign up to those additional services?

John Tully: As I said earlier, I am here to speak for the Metropolitan Police Federation.

Chair: Yes, of course, absolutely.

John Tully: I cannot speak for the administrative affairs of other federations. Certainly, the Met Federation is absolutely upfront and clear with all of its members. I for some time before I was chair was the representative for recruits in training at Hendon or the Met's training school. One of my responsibilities was to clearly define how much the voluntary subscription was going to cost each individual. As to the other subscription services that we provide, such as a group insurance scheme and travel insurance and so on, they are all very clearly defined in leaflets that are given and explained in a question and answer session.

It is not all members that sign up. The Police Act says that everyone who is attested as a constable is automatically a member of the Police Federation, but to access the services we provide you have to be a voluntary subscribing member. Currently, we have in the region of 95% to 96% coverage within the Met. I have now left that responsibility with recruits, but our constables branch within the Met has taken over that responsibility. They report to me that 99% of new recruits currently are signing up for all of the services that we provide.

Q81 Chair: Mr Edwards, do you know who your members are? One of the things that surprised this Committee when we heard from Steve Williams was that he did not have a list of all the members of the Federation. Do you have a database of all your members?

Ian Edwards: No, we don't.

Chair: You don't either?

Ian Edwards: No, we do not. We have access to our force email accounts and to get messages to our members we rely on our local reps. If we need to get a message out, we will say to our local reps, who have Federation email accounts, "This is what we need to get out to the members" and they will obviously use the force email to get that message out. We do not have a database.

Q82 Chair: Mr Tully, that sounds very odd, doesn't it? You take money from people, obviously, because they pay their subscriptions, but you have no idea who your members are. Do you know who all your members are?

John Tully: It would be untrue for me to say that I knew exactly who every member was, but I would also say that I doubt whether the commissioner could tell you how many people he had and exactly where they were. We have recently just gone through a process of elections and that was down to my officers' responsibility. In contacting local human resources departments, it became apparent to me that they did not know who they had, how many people they had and where they were. I accept there is a criticism that the Federation does not have that information, but we rely upon the Chief Officer of Police to give us that information. It is a matter of choice from the membership whether they give us independent email addresses or other contact details.

Q83 Chair: Sure, but how can they access the services if you do not know who the members are?

John Tully: Well, they complete a form and they submit it and we—

Q84 Chair: You just accept it?

John Tully: We have a database of who pays a subscription and what services they have signed up to.

Q85 Chair: This is pretty unsatisfactory, isn't it? We are accepting money from people. We do not know who they are. We try to get messages out. It depends very much on goodwill and the ability to get your chief constables—the Met in your case, Mr Tully—and others to do this.

Ian Edwards: I think there is just a slight breakdown there; I might have misled you slightly. We know who the members are, but we do not have a way of contacting all the members per se. We do know the officers that pay into the Federation and we do know the

officers who pay into the group insurance, but there is no database for us to send a blanket communication to them all.

Q86 Chair: That is not satisfactory, is it?

Ian Edwards: No, it is not and that is why within the review they are talking about a national database, which is again very much reliant on ACPO and the use of their email facilities.

Q87 Chair: Indeed. Finally from me, Mr Tully, do you accept the Normington report in its entirety? Do you think Steve Williams was right to do it and that you now accept all the conclusions or are there still things to discuss?

John Tully: I think there are very much still things to discuss. We have gone through a process within the Metropolitan Police Service and I think other federations have done the same—we have certainly done it in chairmen and secretaries' meetings nationally—where we have addressed each of the recommendations in turn. There are clearly some that we could sign up to today. We have red/amber/green coded them. Currently, the Met's position is that we are pretty much green on 13 of the 36 and there are only eight that we have grave concerns about and are red. The remainder are amber, working towards becoming green. The great majority of the recommendations could be accepted.

Q88 Chair: Were you surprised to hear today that Steve Williams was considering his resignation?

John Tully: I had not heard that previously.

Q89 Chair: Mr Edwards, do you accept Normington? Do you think it was right to set it up? Would you accept all the recommendations?

Ian Edwards: Absolutely. We need to be fit for purpose and I do not think we are.

Q90 Chair: Are they all green, as Mr Tully says, or is it amber?

Ian Edwards: We are not quite as bad as the Met. We have 17 green, 16 amber that we think need more work, and three that are currently red.¹

Q91 Chair: What are the red ones you will not accept? Give us an example; not all of them, just one.

¹ Note by witness: Following my oral evidence, we have re-visited all the recommendations and as a result we now have 19 Green recommendations, 14 amber and 3 red. This differs slightly from my evidence given at the time. [Please see written evidence Fed0005].

Ian Edwards: Okay. I will go to the first one, which is the last one, which is the reduction of 25% of subscriptions, which is quite controversial. We need to be fit for purpose for a long time.

Chair: You have £2.6 million in your bank.

Ian Edwards: Our membership in the West Mids, and I know we have done it recently, is going down 5% year on year. If we were to take the hit in the West Mids of a 25% reduction, by 2018 we would be making a small deficit. Now, I think we need to do some more work to make sure that we are not taking money from the taxpayers' purse. It is important that we are self-sufficient.

Q92 Chair: Mr Tully, you do not want to give any money back, as Mr Normington has suggested?

John Tully: We are in a similar position to West Mids. It is difficult, we think, to make a kneejerk reaction in giving a refund of that amount only to possibly come back the following year to say, "We have to increase these subscriptions". I think it is important to point out, though, Chairman, that when the 23% hike in subscriptions came about nationally the Metropolitan Federation opposed that. We at that time, to offset that increase to our members, included a standalone service that they had previously had to pay for within their subscriptions. They no longer have to pay for that.

Q93 Michael Ellis: Do you know who would have threatened the former head of communications with legal action?

Ian Edwards: No idea.

Q94 Michael Ellis: Former head of communications at the Police Federation? I appreciate it is the national body as opposed to the Met or the West Midlands. You have no idea?

Ian Edwards: No. My dealings with Fiona were very good. I spoke to her once and she advised me on a credit—

Q95 Michael Ellis: Did it seem to you consistent with the culture that you understand to have been the case within the Police Federation?

John Tully: I certainly have not experienced any of that alleged behaviour personally. It did surprise me to hear it today.

Q96 Michael Ellis: What about the use of this public relations company? Whose idea would that have been? Do either of you have any knowledge of it or did you have any knowledge of it when it was undertaken?

John Tully: Well, I was aware that there was an arrangement or a contract between the Gaunt Brothers and the national Federation. It is important to say that the Metropolitan

Federation were not consulted in any way, shape or form around that employment, nor were we consulted when that was terminated.

Q97 Michael Ellis: It was nothing to do with you at the Met?

John Tully: No.

Q98 Michael Ellis: Was it anything to do with you at West Midlands?

Ian Edwards: No. We did sign a contract eventually with the Gaunt Brothers.

Michael Ellis: You did?

Ian Edwards: Yes, following a recommendation from the national Federation. They would supply us with media training, key messages to the members and how to take stories forward into the press.

Q99 Michael Ellis: I see. What about guerrilla tactics?

Ian Edwards: That is not in my contract, no.

Q100 Michael Ellis: Do you think it is appropriate for the police of any branch to undertake guerrilla tactics against a democratically elected Government?

Ian Edwards: No, I do not think it is.

Q101 Michael Ellis: When you or your organisation or your branch of the Federation contracted, you had no intention of any guerrilla tactics being used?

Ian Edwards: No.

Q102 Michael Ellis: Do you know what work they undertook if not nationally then as far as the West Midlands force was concerned?

Ian Edwards: Yes. We had regular meetings with them around stories that were in the media and how our members' concerns could be articulated into stories. For instance, they would examine the media. They would look for stories where there was an interest that we could write to a newspaper and say, "Well, this is our point of view".

Q103 Michael Ellis: Was this at the time, Mr Edwards, when there was a political conference in Birmingham, within the West Midlands area?

Ian Edwards: We employed the Gaunt Brothers for six months in June and that contract terminated in December. So, yes, they were employed by us and other federations.

Q104 Michael Ellis: During the time of a party political conference by the Conservative Party in Birmingham?

Ian Edwards: Yes.

Q105 Michael Ellis: Were you aware that banners were placed by the Police Federation around the conference centre of a political nature?

Ian Edwards: Yes.

Q106 Michael Ellis: Do you approve of those?

Ian Edwards: I would not say of a political nature. They were part of a wider cuts campaign. Yes, I do approve of those. I think we have to robustly voice our members' concerns. That is what we are elected to do and that is what we were doing.

Q107 Michael Ellis: How much did the contract terms include? How much was it?

Ian Edwards: Well, I have signed a confidentiality clause. I am quite happy for the Committee to have the contract once I have taken some advice. I would not like to put myself in a difficult position, or the Federation. I am more than happy for you to see the contract once I have taken some advice.

Q108 Michael Ellis: Certainly. Finally from me, do you accept the characterisation that there is an unacceptable culture within the Police Federation? In other words, what I am saying is do you accept the Normington conclusions and that of over 90% of the members who responded that there needs to be fundamental change?

Ian Edwards: Yes, I do.

Q109 Michael Ellis: You accept that. Who do you think is to blame for the culture having gone wrong in the first place? It may well predate, but I would like to know who you think is to blame for that culture.

Ian Edwards: I cannot say. I do not know.

Q110 Michael Ellis: Well you accept that there is a cultural flaw because you think that it needs change?

Ian Edwards: Yes, I do. I think the problem is that the local Federation interacts with members on a regular daily basis. If there has been a problem, it is the removal of Federation reps into a central committee who do not hear the voices of the members on a daily basis. Whereas my phone is hot, my email is hot, it is important that Federation members nationally also hear that.

Q111 Michael Ellis: Mr Tully, did you want to add anything?

John Tully: Only that it is interesting that the Normington report quotes the response from membership is 91% favouring change. I have no doubt that a proportion of the responses were from Federation members, but not all of the 12,500 responses were received from members. I think that 91% is a misrepresentation of the actual numbers. Notwithstanding that, it is clear to us at the Metropolitan Police Federation that there is need for change. We are supporting it through its processes, but I think it is very important that we do not kneejerk, that we do not rush into something that fails in a very short time, and that we get it right first time round.

Q112 Michael Ellis: Who do you blame for the culture having gone wrong in the first place?

John Tully: It is difficult to pinpoint any individuals. I think it may be, as Mr Edwards says, a removal from frontline reality, as it were, in some respects from the national committee.

Q113 Mark Reckless: Do either of you gentlemen accept any of that blame yourselves or do you have any regrets over how your federations have been involved with the campaign against the cuts and specifically the use of Andrew Mitchell's incident?

John Tully: It is very difficult for me to make any comment in respect of Andrew Mitchell and the Downing Street incident. It is a sub judice issue. Additionally, I am potentially a witness in the civil actions because I have made a statement to the Director of Professional Standards post event. It would be very difficult for me to stray into that area.

Q114 Mark Reckless: Mr Edwards, could I ask you? Do you have any regrets?

Ian Edwards: Yes, I do regret the damage the whole of the incident caused to everybody concerned. I think it would be wrong to comment further while there are three actions still outstanding. Of course I regret the damage caused to everybody.

Q115 Mr Winnick: Would it be right to say that the feeling among police up and down the country over what was called the Winsor report was pretty strong in disapproval? Would that be the position?

Ian Edwards: Absolutely.

Q116 Mr Winnick: Would it also be the case that there was also strong feeling about the cuts imposed by the present Government? They gave their reasons why, of course, but it aroused strong feelings.

Ian Edwards: Yes, that is true. I have never encountered a strength of feeling from the membership. I came on to the Federation full time in 2008. I have never felt that strength from my colleagues that I represent.

Q117 Mr Winnick: If the Police Federation did not reflect that and campaign accordingly, what would be the purpose of the Police Federation, Mr Edwards?

Ian Edwards: Absolutely. I would be out of post within a very short space of time if I failed to represent my members' views. As chair of West Mids, that is what I am elected to do and that is what I try my very hardest to do.

Q118 Mr Winnick: Therefore, if the response was minimal, if the leadership, be it yourselves or your other senior colleagues, showed very little interest despite the very strong feelings of your members, they would say, "Well"—

Ian Edwards: They would stop paying is the answer.

Q119 Mr Winnick: Yes. Recognising that and arising from the question that has been put to you by Mr Reckless, is it not the case that some of the tactics used, leaving aside a recommendation over the reform of the Police Federation, and certainly what happened over Andrew Mitchell, played right into the hands of the very people who were pursuing policies that your members are very strongly opposed to?

Ian Edwards: Yes, hindsight is an absolutely fantastic thing. In the same situation again, I do not think our Federation would do the same.

Q120 Mr Winnick: Mr Tully, you would agree that it played right into the hands of the very people pursuing policies that you were campaigning about?

John Tully: Certainly, Mr Winnick, I concur with Mr Edwards' characterisation of how we represent our members. It is of the utmost importance that we reflect their views. I think it is regrettable, not straying into the specifics of the Downing Street incident, that there are so many distractions that have grown out of that incident that have deflected us from the true purpose of why we are here today, which is to promote the reform of the Police Federation.

Q121 Mr Winnick: The final question from me, because otherwise we will not have an audience at all, simply is this. Will you be willing with your senior colleagues to do everything possible to carry out the reforms that are necessary, and certainly necessary on behalf of your members, to make sure the Police Federation is one where one can admire the work being done and that the internal workings will not be subject to justified criticism?

John Tully: Absolutely, and I submitted a written report to the Committee prior to this meeting that reflects our willingness to engage in the process. I think I have already said it is important that we get the process correct and the end result is fit for purpose and that we should not rush into it. Certainly, we support the process.

Q122 Mr Winnick: I take that to be your view as well, Mr Edwards?

Ian Edwards: Absolutely.

Mr Winnick: So we can keep an audience for the moment.

Q123 Dr Huppert: First, to go back to some of the stuff in Normington, you both identified some red areas. Sometimes red means not implemented yet, some you do not want to implement. Could you perhaps write to the Committee with the list of which are the areas that you do not want to implement as opposed to ones that just take some time?

John Tully: I will send you our full report, green/amber/red.

Ian Edwards: I will do the same.

Q124 Dr Huppert: That would be very helpful from both of you. Can I then turn to the issue about the survey and what people thought? I think, Mr Tully, you questioned the 91% figure. The report says that 68% of members were fairly or very dissatisfied the national leadership was adequately safeguarding their interests. While it was better at local level, which is presumably your areas, 47% were dissatisfied against 30% satisfied. Now, obviously different local areas might be the case. Have you had a chance to have a look at your own local breakdowns? Do you have a sense of how that can be addressed?

Ian Edwards: There are a lot of outside factors and it is people's perceptions about what is achievable and what is not achievable. Quite often I have spoken to my members who have said to me, "Why haven't you stopped the pension reforms? I am working longer, paying more and getting less as a result". It is probably about communication and what is achievable and saying to people, "We are in a different world. We are in a time of austerity". The police have been through a period where money was not really the issue. Now we are suffering. It is about educating people's perception of what is achievable locally. Myself and John do not negotiate nationally around pay and conditions, but it is important that they know that we are passing their message on nationally so that the people I represent feel that they are being heard.

Q125 Dr Huppert: The problem is that they do not understand how hard you are working for them?

Ian Edwards: I think there is some of that, yes.

John Tully: I think there is a misconception or a lack of understanding, and that is not meant to be disrespectful to the membership. They do not see the West Midlands Police Federation. They do not see the Met Police Federation. They see "the Federation" and they see their terms and conditions eroded. They see their access to overtime eroded, their pay frozen for two years, their incremental rates frozen for two years, and the relentless media attack on policing in general, the reference to historical incidents that tar everyone with the same brush. Our morale is rock bottom and I think the important thing is they do not differentiate between ourselves and the national Federation because a lot of that is the national Federation's responsibility. Negotiating pay and conditions is their bag.

Where our strength lies, I think, is local representation and negotiation with chief officers, in our case the commissioner. We have a fantastic working relationship with the current senior leadership team of the Met and with the Deputy Mayor for Policing. That is where I think we excel. The other area where we excel is in representation, which our members pay for. If you balance all the negatives in the atmosphere of policing, there is no wonder that there was such a damning response to the request for information by the Normington team.

Mark Reckless: Dr Huppert, do you have one last question?

Q126 Dr Huppert: Yes. I do tend to agree there is a real problem with morale among police. I have spoken to a huge number of police officers who are very upset about some of the incidents that have happened and how that has reflected on the vast majority of police officers who do not get caught up in these sorts of problems. I am slightly concerned that both of you seem to be suggesting that the major problem is simply that they do not know what you do. In most organisations, if they do not really know what you are doing for them, that suggests you have a massive communications problem and that you need to address that as a matter of urgency.

Ian Edwards: I think the people we touch locally understand what we do and when they are asking for representation locally, be it discipline, personnel equalities, bullying issues, they see what we do locally.

Dr Huppert: But they say they are dissatisfied.

Ian Edwards: I guess it is more difficult from a point of view to see what is achieved nationally. Although I know there is a lot of hard work going on nationally to try to protect their pay and conditions, I think it is a communication issue. I need to make sure that I am passing that back down to the people I represent saying, "Look, we are working hard nationally and locally to try to maintain your pay and conditions".

Q127 Mark Reckless: Mr Tully and Mr Edwards, finally from me, is there a tension between around 80% of Federation members being constables, yet there then being equal representation for the three branches? Does that lead to the constables almost acting as a union within a union, so to speak?

John Tully: That certainly does not happen within the Metropolitan Police Federation. As we are currently constituted, each rank group has equal representation. We each have equal voices around the table. Clearly, the Normington report suggests that should change. I am not entirely convinced that that is the right way to go. We need to think long and hard before we make such a fundamental change to the organisation, but it may be that some of the constables around the country feel underrepresented.

Q128 Mark Reckless: Mr Edwards, does the organisation not need fundamental change?

Ian Edwards: No, it does. I think it does need fundamental change and that is why we have put a lot of time and effort into going through the Normington report and thoroughly support what is happening, thoroughly support Steve Williams.

Q129 Mark Reckless: Do you support those recommendations about the changes for the representation of the three different ranks?

Ian Edwards: I think we need to look at it. I agree with John, it needs careful consideration because we should not be rushing into something that we have to fix again in two or three years' time. This needs sorting properly.

Mark Reckless: Mr Tully, Mr Edwards, thank you very much for coming to the Committee today. This session is closed.

John Tully: Thank you.

Ian Edwards: Thank you.

