



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
POLICE, FIRE and COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2019
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor J Goodfellow (Convener)
Councillor F Dugdale
Councillor J Findlay
Councillor N Gilbert
Councillor C Hoy
Councillor C McGinn

Police Scotland

Chief Superintendent J McKenzie
Chief Inspector N Mitchell
Inspector V Hughes

East and Midlothian Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Mr S Gourlay, Area Commander
Mr A Anderson, Group Commander

Council Officials Present:

Ms M Patterson, Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services)
Ms S Saunders, Head of Communities and Partnerships
Mr P Vestri, Service Manager – Corporate Policy and Improvement
Mr K Black, Safer Communities Team Leader
Ms B Crichton, Committees Officer

Clerk:

Ms F Currie

Apologies:

Councillor L Bruce
Councillor K McLeod

Declarations of Interest:

None

1. MINUTES OF MEETING OF 29 MAY 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 May 2019 were approved.

2. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

3. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTE CONVENER

The Convener proposed Councillor Findlay as the Depute Convener, and this was seconded by Councillor Hoy. There were no other nominations.

Decision

The Committee agreed to appoint Councillor Findlay as the Depute Convener of the Police, Fire and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee.

4. POLICE SCOTLAND SCRUTINY REPORT, QUARTER 2 – 2019/2020

Chief Superintendent McKenzie provided opening comments prior to the report, including: information about new devices attached to officers' uniforms to enable them to undertake all tasks remotely, allowing for greater visibility of Police on the streets; the ability of the wider division to bid for resources from the force reserve to police events, etc.; and that the solvency rates in East Lothian were close to some of the highest in Scotland.

Chief Inspector Neil Mitchell provided a detailed summary of the performance report. He detailed the performance results for each of the seven groups compared with the previous year, as well as highlighting prevention, intervention and enforcement activity. He noted there had been increased domestic abuse reporting, showing increased confidence in victims reporting crimes of domestic violence. He gave information about the team's involvement in Sixteen Days of Action Against Domestic Violence and the White Ribbon Campaign. He also highlighted work of Police Scotland Youth Volunteers and recruitment of Special Constables in the local area.

Responding to a question from Councillor Findlay, Chief Superintendent McKenzie welcomed East Lothian's position of licensing nail bars. He advised that there had been an increase of people being trafficked into Scotland, and some nail bars had been discovered to be linked to serious and organised crime. He asserted that East Lothian's approach to licensing new nail bars was the best way to tackle crime associated with such establishments; this work had been highlighted and shared as best practice nationally.

Councillor McGinn raised that he had worked with a number of families who were suffering due to the use of cocaine, and questioned whether there was a particular problem with drug manufacturing and cultivation in East Lothian. Chief Inspector Mitchell advised that Police did not have particular intelligence to suggest that there had been a significant increase in the supply of cocaine, but would encourage more intelligence to be passed on from services or the public. He remarked that Police operations had made East Lothian a difficult place for drug manufacturers to set up. Chief Superintendent McKenzie stated that there were serious problems with drug deaths in Scotland, noting that figures had risen from 250 per year in 1997 to over 1000 per year in recent years.

Councillor Hoy asked whether there was intelligence to suggest that younger teenagers were becoming involved in more serious drug dealings. Chief Inspector Mitchell stated that a teenager's criminality and vulnerability would be assessed when they came to police attention, and this would be taken to the Police Concerns Hub; multiagency plans would be put in place, as the system was not set up to criminalise young people. He stated that when a young person was identified as abusing or supplying drugs, partner agencies would be tasked to provide support.

Councillor Dugdale asked what the Police were doing to encourage the reporting of domestic abuse, which was still under-reported. Chief Inspector Mitchell stated that tackling domestic abuse had been a priority for a long time, and bespoke local training had been provided to officers. Discussion of domestic abuse had become part a regular part of morning meetings, and police had links with other agencies for third party reporting. Chief Superintendent McKenzie stated that Scotland had led the way in coercive control laws, leading to increased public awareness and confidence in victims to come forward.

Councillor Gilbert questioned whether there was a particular problem in East Lothian with the misuse of prescription drugs, and also whether officers in East Lothian carried naloxone kits for victims of opiate overdose. Chief Superintendent McKenzie remarked that multi drug use was often responsible for fatalities, and that certain prescription drugs were carefully controlled in quantity when dispensed. He stated prescription drugs were clearly impacting on drug deaths nationally. He advised that Mountain Rescue, as well West Midlands Police, had officers carrying, and trained in the administration of, naloxone; this was not current practice in East Lothian.

Councillor Findlay sought reassurance that the new mobile working arrangements for police officers were not the first stage in a move to close police stations. Chief Superintendent McKenzie stated that the move was a modernisation to allow police officers to be more visible in the community and to work anywhere.

Councillor McGinn, Convener of the Licensing Sub-Committee, paid credit to PC Heather Bowsher, who was soon to retire. He highlighted her dedication, professionalism, and the excellent guidance she had provided Committee Members. Councillors Dugdale and the Convener echoed Councillor McGinn's sentiments.

The Convener praised officers for their impressive detection rates. Chief Superintendent McKenzie advised that the role of police was to determine whether a sufficiency of evidence was available to report to the crown, and praised his officers for their hard work in detection.

The Convener thanked Chief Superintendent McKenzie and Chief Inspector Mitchell for their detailed report, and remarked that increased visibility of officers would be a positive step going forward.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the report.

5. POLICE SCOTLAND CONTACT ASSESSMENT MODEL

Inspector Vince Hughes gave a presentation to inform the Committee Members of Police Scotland's new Contact Assessment Model. Inspector Hughes provided comparison with the current model, and stated that the Police's response to critical incidents would not change. He explained that the new assessment model would remove the current call

grading system and instead callers would be assessed under the THRIVE assessment model (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability, Engagement). He highlighted that in some cases, officers could meet the caller elsewhere at a convenient time if they were looking for advice and guidance. The purpose of the THRIVE assessment would be to make officers available to attend the most vulnerable, and to ensure all callers received the most appropriate response.

Inspector Hughes responded to questions from Members, and advised that the Contact Assessment Model would come to East Lothian by the end of March 2020.

Councillor Dugdale questioned whether partner agencies were equipped to take on the additional work the new model may create. Inspector Hughes advised that there were projects running to help other agencies, but stated that this was also the responsibility of the agencies themselves.

Councillor Gilbert asked whether the reduction of police presence in Prestonpans was a permanent arrangement. Chief Inspector Mitchell explained that policing had not been reduced, but rather all officers were part of one community policing team meaning resources could be concentrated where issues arose; this arrangement was still being reviewed but had been working well. Chief Superintendent McKenzie remarked that he wanted community-based officers to do more for their communities, and for communities not to be raising the same issues each year. He would look into the issue raised by Councillor Gilbert of there rarely being an officer available to attend the Community Council meetings and would report back.

Councillor Hoy enquired as to what happened to those in custody when cells were full at the nearest Police Station. Chief Superintendent McKenzie stated that increasing supervisory cover had been discussed with Chief Superintendent Gary McEwan; if cells were full in Dalkeith, people would be taken to St Leonard's.

Colin McGinn questioned whether officer hours on the beat or taking part in community groups/meetings were preferable from a strategic point of view. Chief Superintendent McKenzie questioned whether every community council required a report from officers; current models were designed to increase visibility of officers.

The Convener thanked Inspector Hughes for his presentation, and praised the steps forward being made with the new Contact Assessment Model.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the content of the presentation.

Sederunt: Inspector Hughes left the meeting.

6. SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE LOCAL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT, 1 APRIL - 30 SEPTEMBER 2019

Stephen Gourlay, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Area Commander, began by welcoming Andy Anderson, Group Commander, to his first meeting of the Police, Fire and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee. He also advised that there had been no attacks on firefighters in the East of Scotland over the bonfire period, and thanked the Police for their support over the period.

Mr Gourlay summarised the key points of the report. He noted that the SFRS had responded to 794 incidents in the period reported, a decrease of 90 incidents compared to the previous year. He noted that incidents in East Lothian were below average per head of population compared to the rest of Scotland, and there had been a reduction in accidental dwelling fires. He drew attention to fire casualties, which had decreased by one compared to the previous year and had continued to remain low in East Lothian. Members were advised that almost 466 home safety visits had been carried out during the period. On 'Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals' (UFAS), he reported that the service had responded to more than 283 such incidents, which showed an increase, but was not unique to the area. He also highlighted the home safety visit referrals from the Community Access Team.

Councillor McGinn raised the prevention of countryside issues, such as hay bale fires. Mr Gourlay advised that a rural crime initiative was underway, including encouraging farmers to think about how best to prevent crime, and work taking place in schools to discourage deliberate fires. He advised that SFRS had not seen a significant increase in deliberate fires with the good weather over the summer.

Councillor Gilbert asked whether statistics around home fire safety visits were recorded. Mr Gourlay advised that statistics were captured on an electronic system; SFRS officers fit smoke detectors and gave advice on their visits. He noted that a property may remain high risk even after a home fire safety visit had taken place, due not to the house but rather to the occupant.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the report.

7. TACKLING ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services) advising of the number of antisocial behaviour complaints made to the Council during the reporting period and of ongoing actions being undertaken by local partner agencies in tackling antisocial behaviour.

Kenny Black, Safer Communities Team Leader, presented the report. He drew particular attention to Sections 3.9-3.10 of the report, noting the slight reduction in antisocial behaviour complaints. He advised that there had been 403 referrals made to the Resolution Service since 1 August 2019, of which 213 had concluded in full written agreements. He informed Members that serious cases were discussed by the multi-agency Antisocial Behaviour Case Monitoring Group on a four-weekly basis. He noted that there were 48 live ASBOs in place in East Lothian. Referring to Section 3.16, Mr Black informed Members that the Antisocial Behaviour Overview Group would be asked to approve a consultation version of the new three-year Antisocial Behaviour Strategy in December 2019, which would go out for consultation in early 2020.

The Convener commented that complainers held the Antisocial Behaviour Overview Group in high regard, and congratulated the team.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the report.

8. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON STRATEGIC POLICE PRIORITIES

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services) to inform Committee of the council's response to the Scottish Government Consultation on Strategic Police Priorities (SPPs).

Paolo Vestri, Service Manager – Corporate Policy and Improvement, presented the report. He provided background information on SPPs, and informed Members that the council's response had been that they were happy with the proposed SPPs, but felt that localism should remain a priority for police and as such should be included in the SPPs. He advised that no specific response would be provided from the Scottish Government, but that responses to the consultation would be considered before the new SPPs would be published.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the report.

9. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

The work programme was approved, and there were no items added.

Signed

Councillor Jim Goodfellow
Convener of the Police, Fire and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee