



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

**THURSDAY 13 MAY 2021
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor J Goodfellow (Convener)
Councillor L Bruce
Councillor F Dugdale
Councillor J Findlay
Councillor N Gilbert
Councillor C Hoy (Items 2 – 7)
Councillor C McGinn
Councillor K McLeod

Police Scotland

Chief Superintendent J McKenzie
Chief Inspector N Mitchell
Superintendent S Mertes (Items 1 and 2)

East and Midlothian Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

Council Officials Present:

Mr D Proudfoot, Executive Director for Place
Ms S Saunders, Head of Communities
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:

None

Declarations of Interest:

None

NOTE: Initial internet connection issues resulted in the meeting being paused for a short period while participants disconnected from and reconnected to the digital meetings system. The meeting resumed at 2.40pm.

1. MINUTES OF MEETING OF 14 NOVEMBER 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2020 were approved.

2. POLICE SCOTLAND SCRUTINY REPORT, QUARTER 3 AND 4 – 2020/21

Chief Superintendent McKenzie provided opening comments prior to the report and presentation. He reflected on the previous 6 months highlighting positive outcomes from partnership working within the community and continuing challenges faced by officers on the frontline. He reminded Members that they were about to enter a busy period with increased visitors to the area during the summer and the resulting implications for resources. He also referred to the impending COP26 summit in Glasgow which would place a resourcing burden on officers within the area.

Superintendent Suzie Mertes gave a presentation on the Criminal Justice Services Division Remodelling Programme and proposed amendments to the National Custody Operating Model. She explained that the purpose of the reforms was to achieve better outcomes for people in custody and to return more police officers to frontline duties. Superintendent Mertes advised that Dalkeith Police Station's custody suite was to be reclassified from a Primary to an Ancillary Custody Centre – meaning it would move from a 24 hour resource to part-time - and she outlined how this would impact officers working within East Lothian. She assured Members that the reclassification did not mean that the Centre was to be closed or decommissioned. She added that, following consultation, any agreed changes would be implemented from July 2021.

Superintendent Mertes responded to questions from Members. She did not anticipate the change of location resulting in any negative impact on legal representation for those in custody. She provided further detail on how the changes would affect operational resources within East Lothian, such as additional travelling time and backfilling of officers when on custody duty. She advised Members that a range of factors had been included in the analysis of options and she offered to provide figures to Members on travelling times to and from Edinburgh from various locations in the county.

In response to further questions, Superintendent Mertes explained that some officers who may previously have worked in the custody suit in Dalkeith may opt not to undertake the same role in Edinburgh and may stay in the local area thereby increasing frontline officer numbers. She also confirmed that the ancillary centre at Eyemouth could be activated if required.

The Convener thanked Superintendent Mertes for her presentation but acknowledged that there may be some concern about movement of custody services towards the centre of Edinburgh.

Chief Inspector Neil Mitchell provided a detailed summary of the performance report. He outlined the performance results for each of the seven groups compared with the previous year and advised that these figures continued to be impacted by COVID-19. He highlighted prevention, intervention and enforcement activity in relation to older/vulnerable people affected by acquisitive crimes, domestic abuse, antisocial behaviour, road safety, drug crimes and serious and violent crimes. He commended the work of local officers who he said

had shown remarkable resilience during the past year and also community partners who had given such strong support to frontline services.

In response to questions from Members, Chief Inspector Mitchell provided further information on the police response to local drug crime, and the outcomes from Operations Juneau and County Lines. He acknowledged continuing concerns about possible under-reporting of domestic abuse incidents and described some of the continuing efforts to support and encourage victims as well as tackling offenders. He also advised Members of a new Problem Solving Partnership set up to deal with the dangers posed by motorised bikes. Replying to the further questions, he advised that while there were no major concerns at present in East Lothian regarding puppy farming or dog thefts, this would be kept under review. He also highlighted ongoing prevention work in relation to speeding and explained that while speed monitoring was 24/7, resources were focused in the areas of greatest concern.

Chief Superintendent McKenzie acknowledged the forthcoming impact on resources from COP26 and responded to concerns about the implications for staff welfare and training. He also responded to a question on the backlog in court cases and the impact on officer time.

Councillor Bruce wished to place on record his thanks to the Local Community Police Officer in his ward who would shortly be moving to new duties.

[Sederunt: The Convener lost connection at this point but re-joined the meeting during Item 3.]

Councillor Findlay offered his thanks to Chief Superintendent McKenzie and Chief Inspector Mitchell for a comprehensive report. He said he looked forward to the next 6 monthly report which, he hoped, would reflect the end of the pandemic and a return to more normal times.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report and presentation

Agenda Items 3 and 4 were taken together.

3. SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES, LOCAL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR EAST LOTHIAN, QUARTER 3 AND 4 2020/21

4. EAST LOTHIAN LOCAL FIRE & RESCUE PLAN

Stephen Gourlay, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Area Commander, summarised the key points of the performance report and gave a brief overview of the issues which had affected his officers over the past 6 months and those with implications for the future of the Service more generally.

He drew attention to generally positive figures contained in the report but noted that numbers may increase as restrictions lifted and the country returned to normal. He advised that prevention work continued although fire home safety visits had been impacted by the need for increased PPE, as had delivery of staff training. However, he hoped that these issues would also see a return to more normal levels in the months ahead.

Referring to the future vision for the Service, he noted strong Scottish Government support to push forward with modernisation which would broaden the role of firefighters. He also updated Members on the current position with pay discussions.

He reported that a consultation exercise would shortly take place on 'Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals' (UFAS), with a number of options being proposed which would have implications for businesses, offices, schools and other public buildings.

Mr Gourlay then presented the Local Fire and Rescue Plan for East Lothian, reminding Members that draft proposals for the Plan had been outlined at the Committee's meeting in November 2020. He advised that many of the previous priorities remained fit for purpose and formed part of this refreshed Plan. He added that the incoming Scottish Government would shortly outline new priorities which would form part of the Plan for next year. In the meantime, he invited the Committee to approve the Plan put before them.

Mr Gourlay responded to questions from Members providing further details of prevention and protection work on residential and non-residential premises and on the challenges faced in accessing schools to promote the Tomorrow's Driver Programme.

The Convener thanked Mr Gourlay for his report and for bringing forward the new Local Fire and Rescue Plan.

The vote on the recommendation to approve the Plan (Item 4) was taken by roll call:

Councillor L Bruce	Agreed
Councillor F Dugdale	Agreed
Councillor J Findlay	Agreed
Councillor N Gilbert	Agreed
Councillor J Goodfellow	Agreed
Councillor C Hoy	Agreed
Councillor C McGinn	Agreed
Councillor K McLeod	Agreed

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- i. note the performance report at Item 3; and
- ii. approve the Local Fire and Rescue Plan and note that it would also be presented for approval at full Council.

5. TACKLING ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

A report was submitted by the Executive Director for Place advising of the number, type and geographical breakdown of antisocial behaviour complaints received by the Council during the reporting period and to advise of actions taken in response.

Kenny Black, Team Manager - Safer Communities Team, presented the report. He advised that there had been a 32% increase in antisocial behaviour complaints compared to the same period last year, with a total of 887 complaints received. However, this figure also demonstrated a decrease compared with the figure of 1295 for the first 6 months of this reporting year. He drew Members' attention to the linear analysis of the figures and the breakdown by location contained in the appendices of the report. He stated that there were

18 live ASBOs in place in East Lothian and 2 live eviction cases. The moratorium on ASBO cases had been lifted but court action would only proceed in eviction cases where the antisocial behaviour was deemed “serious”.

Mr Black reported that street-based outreach work had recommenced during the past 6 months with the Community Warden Team maintaining a high-visibility street presence throughout the period. However, the Community Housing and Antisocial Behaviour Officers had continued to work from home.

In reply to a question from the Convener, Mr Black advised that he was in discussions regarding commencement of the Night Time Noise Service as soon as circumstances would allow.

Councillor McLeod said this was an excellent report and he commended the work being done, particularly in the Tranent area.

The Convener concurred, adding that on the two occasions when he had contacted the Warden Team he had received an excellent service.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the report.

6. PFCSSC DRAFT ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

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

Referring back to Agenda Item 2, the Convener asked Chief Inspector Mitchell for an update on the consultation regarding the use of body cameras by officers in Police Scotland. Chief Inspector Mitchell advised that bodycams were not used by officers in Scotland at present but that a pilot exercise would take place during COP26. He said that, personally, he welcomed their use as it aided transparency, but the consultation was still ongoing and it would be sometime before they might be worn by officers in East Lothian.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY 11TH NOVEMBER 2021, 2.00PM

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting.

Signed

Councillor Jeremy Findlay
Depute Convener of the Police, Fire and Community Safety Scrutiny
Committee