



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

**THURSDAY 10 NOVEMBER, 2PM
VIA DIGITAL MEETINGS FACILITY**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor N Hampshire (Convener)
Councillor S Akhtar
Councillor L Allan
Councillor C McGinn
Councillor G McGuire
Councillor L Menzies
Councillor T Trotter

Police Scotland

Chief Inspector J O'Connor
Superintendent Alan Carson

East and Midlothian Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Ms H Sangster, Area Commander
Mark Landels, T/Group Commander

Other Councillors Present

Councillor J Findlay

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 M Scott, Committees Officer

Clerk:

Ms M Scott

Apologies:

Councillor J McMillan (Depute Convener)

Declarations of Interest:

None

- 1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL: POLICE, FIRE & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, 14 JUNE 2022**

The minutes of the 14 June 2022 Police, Fire and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee were approved.

2. SCOTTISH FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE LOCAL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR EAST LOTHIAN – Q1 & Q2 2022/23

Mark Landels, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service T/Group Commander, presented a report on the performance of the Fire and Rescue Service in East Lothian over Quarters 1 and 2 of 2022/23. He spoke in detail to the report, highlighting the six key Fire & Rescue indicators of:

- All accidental dwelling fires
- All fire casualties (fatal and non-fatal)
- All deliberate fires (excluding dwellings)
- Special Service – Road Traffic Collisions
- Special Service Casualties
- False Alarms (Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals)

Hilary Sangster, Area Commander added that the deliberate fires increase excluding dwellings or houses were predominantly based around the unseasonably hot weather over the last 6 months.

In response to a question from Councillor Hampshire, Mr Landels reported that the suspicion of an individual being under the influence of a substance would be taken into consideration when completing the incident report. Ms Sangster added that the fire service look to engage with the community to try and identify those who may be of increased risk through mobility, isolation or behaviours such as drug and alcohol use. She stated The Community Action Team also engage at partner level with the local authority, schools and local groups as well as completing a digital campaign. Ms Sangster made clear she welcomed any referrals and would be happy for her email address to be shared directly. She explained that the department would not leave any house without detection, private residences who don't fit the high risk criteria in detection of the new Scottish Government standard would be fitted with battery operated detection and encouraged to get proper detection. The department would flag this up if the property was local authority housing.

In response to a second question from Councillor Hampshire regarding false calls received by the department Ms Sangster explained that the department had to no legal obligation to attend and services down south withdrew this process a considerable time ago. She noted that all automatic alarm activations would go to a call handling centre who would then contact the nearest crew for them to attend. Ms Sangster reported that the department would be looking to work with premises and business owners so they had a full understanding and were aware of their responsibilities provide information in terms of early detection and preventable measures. Ms Sangster stated she fully appreciated Councillor Hampshire's point but they spend in excess of 46,000 hours turning out to unwanted fire alarm signals and the rescue service set challenging targets which were supported by the government which they were struggling to reduce. She explained that a consultation took place and option A was selected which meant this would reduce the departments unwanted fire alarm signals by the least amount but was the least extreme in terms of change.

In response to a question from Councillor Akhtar Mr Landels explained the service worked alongside Police Scotland who were responsible for the road safety element and would accompany officers on visits to schools to educate "Tomorrow's Driver" in terms of risk of road safety collisions. Mr Landels confirmed the number of road collisions had gone up but as the previous year shad COVID restrictions and less people travelling to work the numbers presented may be average for the same period. Mr Landels advised he did not have exact locations of incidents but when serious injuries or deaths had occurred they were

predominantly on rural roads and dual carriageways not governed by the 20mph rule. Councillor Akhtar agreed to follow up with Mr Landels outside of the meeting for further information on incidents in the Haddington and Lammermuir wards.

In response to a question from Councillor McGinn Mr Landels confirmed that 10 people did not have adequate detection in their homes which was also the average for other areas. Mr Landels explained there could be a number of reasons for this such as alarms being removed to decorate and not refitted and those numbers were reviewed each quarter.

Decision

The committee agreed to note the contents of the Scrutiny Report.

3. SCOTTISH FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

Ms Sangster advised the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service Strategic Plan 2022-2025 had been finalised and approved for Parliament and had been published. She confirmed this would be brought back as an agenda item in the New Year when the local plan for East Lothian would also be looked at and would engage with the consultative process at that stage.

4. POLICE SCOTLAND SCRUTINY REPORT – THE LOTHIAN AND SCOTTISH BORDERS – Q1 AND Q2 2022/23

Police Scotland had submitted a scrutiny report to update members on their work during Quarters 1 and 2 of 2022/23.

Superintendent Alan Carson gave an introduction to the committee as he was fairly new to the role within Prevention and Partnerships. Superintendent Carson highlighted 4 key points of Missing Persons, Domestic Abuse, Violence in Group 1 Offending and Road Casualties that were of a particular significance to him. He gave a detailed overview of the current and future work taking place to address these issues.

Local Area Commander Jocelyn O'Connor, Police Scotland, spoke in detail to the quarter 1 and quarter 2 report, highlighting the local policing priorities of:

- i) Protecting the most vulnerable people;
- ii) Reducing violence & anti-social behaviour;
- iii) Reducing acquisitive crime;
- iv) Improving Road Safety; and
- v) Tackling serious and organised crime,

In response to a question from Councillor Trotter, Commander O'Connor reported that speeding was a continued theme and she did try to ensure officers were spread fairly but ultimately the change needed to come from new drivers. She explained the department were considering a community speed watch scheme which would allow members of the public to be involved with monitoring speeds in their area. Commander O'Connor stated volunteers would be required for this and it would only be appropriate in certain areas to ensure members of the public were not put at risk. She added that it was generally local people committing speeding offenses on their way to and from work so there was no easy solution to the problem, Commander O'Connor stated a Road Safety Governance Group had been

started which had been positive and would look at issues such as speed reduction measures. She reported that the 20mph zones had reduced the speed people were driving but they had continued to drive over the speed limit which was unacceptable.

Superintendent Carson stated that Councillor Trotter was correct and speeding issues did come up in every surgery and forum so the Road Safety Governance Group was a reflection of that and he made it clear it was recognised as a major concern. He explained that officers were deployed based on statistical analysis of proven accident hotspots so the problem occurred when there were areas of concern but no stats to back this up. Superintendent Carson said the RSGG would look at speed calming measures but funding continued to be a problem so the group would look at all options such as altering road layouts to make speeding more difficult. He informed members that the community speed watch had been rolled out in Fife and had been a success so it was something that was being considered for East Lothian. Superintendent Carson asked elected members to continue to share local complaints so the police can try their best to take action. Councillor Trotter offered the support from elected members whenever it was required and added he got to meet his new community officer at the previous evenings CAPS meeting which was reassuring to the village.

In response to a question from Councillor Akhtar Commander O'Connor explained that Operation Juno was the name given to most drug enforcement for a period of time and added that a partnership approach was still being taken just this name was not used anymore. She reported that the Safer Communities Team would look at anti-social behaviour legislation for eviction purposes for those involved in the supply of drugs but during COVID no evictions were being carried out. Commander O'Connor explained that the Police work with MELDAP to look at drug related deaths and also ensure public protection by raising IRD's if there were children staying within an addresses identified as being involved with supplying drugs. She asked elected members to share any intelligence they received with the Police and made it clear she was aware of the ongoing issues with the 101 number but that the public can also report issues online.

In response to a second question from Councillor Akhtar Commander O'Connor reported that the National Domestic Abuse Unit trialed a new product to take into schools to raise awareness of domestic abuse and consent so this had been piloted in Dunbar and was well received. She said there will be a national roll out of this through the Domestic Abuse Prevention Group and she will make further investigations to see where things are and report back as this is not owned by Police Scotland. Commander O'Connor explained complaints of anti-social behaviour would come in due to people shouting or loud banging so there is a need to get people to recognise that could be domestic abuse and it should be reported accordingly. She added that the White Ribbon Campaign would be completing a presentation next week and the Violence Against Woman and Girls 16 Days of Action was starting at the end of next week. There is also the THAT GUY national campaign to encourage males to challenge their peers on unacceptable behaviour. Commander O'Connor reported the DSDAS scheme had been successful and she explained it was not just partners who could request information but also friends and family and the form for this could be found on the Police Scotland website.

In response to a question from Councillor Menzies Commander O'Connor explained that all domestic abuse incidents, not just crimes were reviewed on a daily basis so although underreporting remained a problem, conversion rates remained static. She added that a lot of incidents were people looking for advice on custody or property after a break up or verbal disputes. Commander O'Connor stated the police never want to cause relationship issues but if there was a heated debate they would attend to make sure there was no vulnerable person involved or crime taking place but locking people up due to a dispute would not help support that family. She added that at a management meeting last week it was agreed all

were satisfied the conversion rate was what it should be. Superintendent Carson added he would speak with the DCI to make sure all offers of raising awareness were taken and agreed with Commander O'Conner that the conversion rate generated some discussion at the management meeting. Superintendent Carson stated the police continue to appeal for more calls as they would rather receive calls where people were unsure of domestic abuse than not receive a call at all. He added that when investigating cases of domestic abuse they come across witnesses who have seen or heard vital information which was helpful for conviction but if they had reported this earlier there may not have been a need for an investigation. Superintendent Carson reassured members that if there was a concern the police would investigate and that there was still a significant investment to domestic abuse awareness training and that there were no lost opportunities in terms of converting incidents into crimes where there was criminality.

In response to a question from Councillor Hampshire Superintendent Carson confirmed it was possible to track a missing person using their mobile phone as long as the intrusion was justified. Commander O'Connor added that this technique was used a lot in high risk missing person investigations along with tracking social media.

In response to a further question from Councillor Hampshire Superintendent Carson stated that the suggestion of more community resilience for young people and a place to attend to feel safe was appealing so he would be happy to continue that discussion off table as it was something he really wanted to make an impact on. He added that he was aware the police are sometimes the last people a missing person want to talk to so a less authoritative figure could be a better approach. Commander O'Connor explained that some young people are placed far away from their home for good reason as it was not safe for them to be around there or associates they had there but now Young Scot Cards allowed them to travel around easily. She said young person's units are now asked to complete the "return interviews" for missing young people as most of them have not had great experiences with the police and are therefore not forthcoming with information. She explained that return interviews are robust as missing young people could be victims of child exploitation and if they were to go missing again this interview could help pinpoint where they may have went or who they may be with.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the Scrutiny Report.

4. TACKING ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The Executive Director for Place had submitted a report to advise the Committee on the number, type and geographical breakdown of antisocial behaviour complaints received by East Lothian Council during the reporting period (1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022) and to advise on actions taken in response to same.

Kenny Black, Team Manager - Safer Communities Team, spoke to the report in detail, highlighting the overall number of Antisocial Behaviour Complaints, the number of repeat complaints, a decrease in the number of complaints received compared to 2020 and the themes for complaints (noise, youth, drug misuse, and others including shouting, swearing and neighbour disputes). Mr Black gave information on the breakdown of complaints by place, comparisons to the equivalent reporting period in 2021/22, the work of Problem Solving Partnerships, that there were 6 live Antisocial Behaviour Orders in East Lothian and that 87 parental advisory letters had been sent within the reporting period. Mr Black added that planned use of the recently procured "Noise App", allowing complainers to contemporaneously record instances of noise and to send them to the safer communities'

team for analysis, was in the final stages of implementation subject to concluding data protection matters.

Councillor Akhtar thanked Mr Black for his comprehensive report and commended the coordinated efforts made by the community wardens, the youth diversionary work and the mediation service.

Councillor Hampshire stated it was clear the intervention of additional youth work has caused a significant reduction in anti-social behaviour but as there are difficult times ahead it may be tough to keep this going but the more youth work is protected the more communities will benefit. Councillor Hampshire thanked Mr Black and his team for their work.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the terms of the report.

5. PFCSSC DRAFT ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

A draft annual work programme was presented to Committee.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the programme.

Signed

Councillor Norman Hampshire
Convener of the Police, Fire and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee