



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

**WEDNESDAY 21 JUNE 2023
VIA DIGITAL MEETINGS FACILITY**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor N Hampshire (Convener)
Councillor J McMillan (Depute Convener)
Councillor G McGuire
Councillor L Menzies
Councillor T Trotter

Police Scotland

Mr B Leathes, Acting Chief Inspector
Mr A Carson, Superintendent

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Mr M Landels, Group Commander
Mr D Morrison, Station Commander

Other Councillors Present

Councillor C Cassini
Councillor C McFarlane

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
Ms L Crothers, Service Manager – Protective Services
Mr K Black, Safer Communities Team Leader

Clerk:

Ms M Scott

Apologies:

Councillor S Akhtar
Councillor C McGinn
Hilary Sangster, Area Commander

Declarations of Interest:

None

- 1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL: POLICE, FIRE & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, 10 NOVEMBER 2022**

The minutes of the Police, Fire and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee held on 10 November 2022 were approved.

2. POLICE SCOTLAND SCRUTINY REPORT – THE LOTHIAN AND SCOTTISH BORDERS – Q3 AND Q4 2022/23

Police Scotland had submitted a scrutiny report to update members on their work during Quarters 3 and 4, 2022/23.

Superintendent Alan Carson welcomed Acting Chief Inspector Ben Leathes who has taken over from Jocelyn O'Connor.

Acting Chief Inspector Ben Leathes, Police Scotland, spoke in detail to the 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,

and provided a thorough outline of the report's contents.

Councillor Hampshire stated he was aware licensed premises were being used differently nowadays with more people drinking at home and heading to establishments later in the evening. He asked if the police were being mindful of this when they are being called out to licensed premises. Mr Leathes stated they would monitor the incidents around licensed premises and confirmed there were no monitored premises in East Lothian at the minute. He added they would seek to educate the licensee on their responsibilities as we cannot stop someone from drinking in their home but we can stop them obtaining more alcohol within a licensed premises. Mr Leathes stated he had a meeting recently with members of the Licensing Board and the Police Licensing Team and we are seeking to promote early engagement with licensees.

In response to a further question from Councillor Hampshire, Mr Leathes stated he was familiar with the issues raised especially in East Linton and there is a response in place through the task and coordination group with a camera being set up at the bus stop to see people arriving as well as teaming up with the bus service to flag anyone who may be heading in that direction to cut them off. Mr Leathes explained there is no quick solution to the travel issues as this is sitting with the Scottish Government and the police can only act on the policy that comes away whether there is allowance to remove bus passes from young people causing issues. Mr Leathes confirmed school link officers had been provided with a list of young people involved in incidents to explain the importance of behaving within all communities.

Councillor McMillan said he has attended the Police Scotland Young Volunteers meetings for years and he found the standard of commitment from officers to be tremendous with young people really using officers as role models. He asked how often the service received compliments and if they were recorded in the same way as complaints and how the service could report on the disposal of complaints. Mr Leathes said it was always really positive to receive emails or notes of thanks but these were usually informal and not recorded in a formal process. Mr Carson stated the Police were quite a self-organisation as staff are always motivated to not get anything wrong and if they do how to prevent it from happening again in the future. He explained complaints were dealt with the same way which meant the positive feedback can get lost and he wasn't aware of any formal method for recording any positive feedback but a letter or email would go to the Chief Constable so he could make officers aware of it. Mr Carson said they do not measure how complaints have been resolved as most of

them were dealt with without requiring an investigation. He was happy to take these points away to figure out a way to measure the positive feedback and to accurately measure the resolutions of complaints.

Replying to questions from Councillor Menzies, Mr Leathes stated he was not aware of any officers within East Lothian being asked to participate with bus services or how wide they were taking the feedback net. Mr Leathes explained it was difficult to identify specific complainers but this is something he would be happy to take away. Mr Carson confirmed that any vexatious complaints would not be deducted from the complaints numbers but he would be happy to take these issues away and discuss with professional standards how best to address these and gauge the positives. Mr Carson reported that the issues around Young Scot cards was not limited to East Lothian and because of this communication channels should be open with Young Scot given it is a common problem. Mr Carson was happy to take this away as an action to assess and instigate. Sharon Saunders, Head of Communities explained the Council do have a direct link with the Young Scot team in East Lothian through the Connected Communities Team we have a regular update meeting with them about the use of the Young Scot card and its roll out and deployment in East Lothian, including the benefits to young people and their families but also the concerns raised today. Sharon agreed to contact the officers who participate in the meetings with Young Scot to highlight these issues once again.

Decision

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

3. SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE LOCAL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR EAST LOTHIAN – Q3 AND Q4 2022/23

Group Commander Mark Landels, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service announced the crew from Musselburgh Station who were nominated for third response have now been fully trained and this station had been earmarked as a strategic national resource for wild fire and will be receiving specialist equipment and training before the end of the year. Mr Landels added the service would continue to promote and engage with the community in regards to water safety. He also welcomed David Morrison, Station Commander in the Prevention and Protection Team to the Fire and Rescue Service.

Mr Landels presented a report on the performance of the Fire and Rescue Service in East Lothian over Quarters 3 and 4 of 2022/23. He spoke in detail to the report and highlighted the key indicators of:

- i) Reduction of False Alarms (all)
- ii) Reduction of all accidental fires
- iii) Reduction of Special Service
- iv) Reduction of False Alarms – Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals
- v) Reduction of Special Service – Road Traffic Collisions
- vi) Reduction of Special Service – Fatalities
- vii) Reduction of Special Service – Road Traffic Collision casualties

and provided a thorough outline in each of these areas.

Councillor Hampshire asked if the department looked at a breakdown of road traffic accidents which take place on the A1 trunk road and what takes place on the road network throughout East Lothian. Mr Landels was unable to report on this but agreed to look at the types of incidents taking place, the addresses and any trends and report this back to him. Mr Morrison gave an update on how the Prevention and Protection Team were addressing issues highlighted by trends within East Lothian. Superintendent Alan Carson, Police Scotland stated a lot of effort goes into the Road Safety Governance Group which is well attended and

supported through Ian Lennox and answers to Councillor Hampshire's question may lie within that group and could be looked at off table.

In response to a second question from Councillor Hampshire, Mr Landels confirmed a domestic incidence response would be completed after every incident and crews routinely engage with where the incident has occurred and also nearby properties by leafleting or engaging with the street. He added where possible fire safety visits would be arranged for smoke detectors to be fitted and advise to be given. Mr Landels stated the smoke detection that would be fitted would not be the interconnected devices as per guidance from Scottish Government as these can only be installed under a set criteria. Mr Morrison added that since the new legislation on fire alarms released in February 2020 private landlords should have updated their properties themselves, the same with local authorities which leaves a small number of domestic privately owned properties which we would never leave without smoke detection. He noted in terms of single occupancy households this was a trend all over Scotland and single male occupiers are the most common. Mr Morrison explained the department has a duty of care towards vulnerable adults they would make contact with social work and submitting the correct paperwork and if required joint visits would be carried out.

Councillor Trotter asked for more information on the decision to not attend fire alarms at retail, education or commercial properties. Mr Landels explained this was in line with the Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals as the numbers were quite high relating to these premises and it can be disruptive to the business having to evacuate and stand outside waiting on the department to attend. Mr Landels stressed that if there had been any indication of a fire either suspected or confirmed the fire and rescue service would always mobilise an appliance. He explained they were educating their responsible persons to back the call up with a 999 call if a fire is suspected to limit the amount of attendances at buildings were something minor has set off the alarm. Mr Landels explained that having up to three vehicles attending these calls with blue lights on puts the crews at risk as well as the public so this is something they wish to reduce but the decision to continue to attend sleeping risks such as hospitals still stands after looking at the risk profile. Mr Morrison echoed Mr Landels points and added that the cost to local communities was being wasted through poor fire safety maintenance within businesses. He added the prevention and protection team would continue to work with businesses on their fire safety.

Councillor Menzies asked if the department found there were repeat fires to people living chaotic lives or vulnerable adults and is there an escalation that is easily available to you if you are finding that. Mr Morrison explained the team submit a safeguarding form to social services on the property at attend and even if it is a known same offender we would continue to send referrals to keep that person to the top of the pile and we would consult with social services to see if they have history with the occupant to ensure they are receiving the support they require.

Councillor Hampshire asked if we have identified a vulnerable person who has a history of incidents do we make sure their property is fitted with smoke detection. Mr Landels confirmed no property would be left without smoke detection, whether high or low risk. Councillor Hampshire stated that our Homelessness team have to house people in private let accommodation and he would like to ensure these have the correct smoke detection fitted and he would follow up with this after today's meeting.

Douglas Proudfoot, Executive Director for Place added in terms of the 1st of July change the Council participated in the consultation exercise and whilst our concern is mitigated where we have attendance during the day at these properties where there can be confirmation of a fire but there is a transfer of risk to the local authority when those properties are unattended during the night, such as education premises where we would be unable to confirm if there was a fire at night so this is something that is being looked at in terms of our risk register.

Councillor McMillan thanked Mr Landels for his well prepared and presented report and asked if the department felt the new domestic legislation on integrated fire alarms had made a difference and how common it was people were complying with that legislation. Mr Landels confirmed the enquiry level increased enormously as people were looking for the new interlinked smoke detection but unfortunately we only fit this in home if the occupier meets the exact needs as specified by the Scottish Government and after being informed of this the interest from people reduced. He added that he is aware some people have not followed through on getting the interlinked system after they had been told the fire and rescue would not fit this. Mr Morrison confirmed the new legislation was brought in in February 2022 and noted it was high risk occupiers who were fitted with the new interlinked fire alarms to ensure they were not missed out. He added that QR codes were placed on stations for people to check what was required of them and highlight that noncompliance could potentially affect their home insurance. Councillor McMillan also asked about the recruitment and retention of staff. Mr Landels said in terms of retention and recruitment the fire and rescue service had been effected by people retiring early and they had a high level of trainees. He confirmed there were two recruitment courses scheduled for the fire service this year, one ongoing at the moment and another scheduled for September. These courses are for 48 people and as it is a national recruitment the staff would be split up all over Scotland. Mr Landels confirmed the retention of staff had been challenging but they are managing this with the help of transfers and inter service transfers.

Councillor Hampshire asked a question in regards to potential fire risks coming to East Lothian through wind farms. Mr Landels confirmed this was constantly reviewed under the management of risk incidents we respond to and the lithium batteries and structures were a concern so the service have been looking at new technology such as fire blankets and high pressure fire lances, one of which is held in North Berwick. He explained how this equipment worked and the expense of it but stated this was the type of investment fire and rescue were putting into new risks developing in communities. Councillor Hampshire stated planning applications would be coming in to Council and asked if the fire and rescue service could make comment on them. Mr Landels stated that the department can visit a property to have a plan on where the nearest hydrants and water supply is and look at the type of construction of the building and provide a score metrix to decide if we would need to visit the property on a yearly, three yearly or five yearly basis to maintain the knowledge of risk on each area. Mr Morrison reported he sat on a national forum last year through Scottish Power Energy Networks which highlighted the work that would be happening in East Lothian and they offered to work with the fire and rescue service to give crew familiarisation and highlight the risks. He noted they were still waiting on further roll out to carry out these visits. Mr Morrison confirmed nothing would go through planning without the fire engineering department within prevention and protection being consulted on and confirmed it would not get passed the set criteria within building standards without this.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the verbal report.

4. TACKLING 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 October 2022 to 31 March 2023) 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, themes for complaints (noise, youth, drug misuse, and others including shouting, swearing and neighbour disputes), a breakdown of complaints by place, comparisons to the equivalent reporting period in 2021/22, the work of Problem Solving Partnerships, that there were 12 live Antisocial Behaviour Orders in East Lothian, two live eviction cases before Edinburgh Sheriff Court, the Antisocial Behaviour Case Monitoring Group were currently monitoring 49 cases, 16 of which are drug related, there were now 6 CCTV cameras being used in known "hotspots", 34 joint Police / Council letters were sent to the parents of children whom the police had identified as being present in instances and areas affected by antisocial behaviour and the planned use of the recently procured "Noise App",

In response to a question from Councillor Hampshire, Mr Black explained they continued to use parental advisory letters and highlighted these come from the ASB team and are also counter signed by our Antisocial Behaviour Police Investigation Officer so they carry a bit of weight. He added that the vast majority of responses from parents are highly positive and they are thankful for bringing such issues to their attention.

Councillor Trotter asked how useful the department find the mobile cameras. Mr Black explained the cameras had been extremely useful and had helped recover evidence against individuals which had allowed action to be taken against perpetrators. He noted their presence alone can also deter antisocial behaviour. In a follow up question Councillor Trotter asked if 6 cameras were sufficient due to East Lothian being a big area. Mr Black stated acquiring more would be useful in tackling antisocial behaviour in the future. Ms Saunders added that we have a static network of CCTV cameras across East Lothian which targets key areas around our towns and communities. She explained the main bulk of our investment is within the static camera network and within the budget allocation we have been able to increase the number of mobile cameras from two to six. Ms Saunders explained the mobile cameras were moved and utilised across the county on a regular basis based on data and intelligence. She added at the end of the upgrade and installation of the static CCTV camera network if there was any budget provision remaining we would be open to purchasing more mobile cameras. Ms Saunders agreed to share the update on the network with Councillor Trotter outside of the meeting.

Councillor Menzies asked if we are doing enough for our young people and what could we do better to ensure they are getting the best chances at a positive outcomes. Councillor Hampshire agreed any child who gets involved in antisocial behaviour we have failed as a society and we need to do everything we can to ensure they take the right decision to go down a positive pathway and if not we have to have something in place that protects the rest of society from that antisocial behaviour. Ms Saunders reported everyone will be aware of the Council's focus on transforming services for children and young people and we have a programme board who look intensively at what we do to support them to achieve the best outcomes in life. She added that after a responsible parent or carers received a letter from the antisocial behaviour team they would usually step in and take on the responsibility for their child but and was confident that the corporate body and collective partners have a really strong focus on improving the outcomes for young people and creating opportunities that enable most of our young people to make the right choices. Ms Saunders explained for the few who do not make that decision our collective effort is then in supporting them to have the opportunity to reflect and improve on their behaviour.

Councillor McMillan complimented Mr Black and his colleagues on all their hard work.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the performance report.

5. LOCAL POLICE PLANS: A FRAMEWOK FOR SCRUTINY

A report was submitted by the Service Manager for Corporate Policy and Improvement for information and awareness raising with Members of the Police, Fire and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee.

Mr Paolo Vestri, Service Manager for Corporate Policy and Improvement explained the report sets out from a Scottish Police Authority and COSLA perspective what should be in local police plans and the role that Councils have in scrutinising and then monitoring them when they have been put in place. He added there was a useful check list for Members to consider when looking at police plans and how they securitise how those plans are being implemented locally.

There were no questions for Mr Vestri.

Councillor Hampshire stated it was a document all Members had to review to ensure services were given the proper scrutiny they need. He suggested all Members review this offline and at the next meeting can bring in some of these questions for the police.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the report.

6. PFCSSC DRAFT ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

A draft annual work programme was presented to Committee.

Decision

The Committee agreed to approve the programme.

Signed

Councillor Norman Hampshire

Convener of the Police, Fire and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee