



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

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

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**Committee Members Present:**

Councillor Akhtar  
Councillor Allan  
Councillor Hampshire (Chair)  
Councillor McGinn  
Councillor McGuire  
Councillor McMillan  
Councillor Menzies  
Councillor Trotter

**Police Scotland**

Mr B Leathes, Chief Inspector  
Mr A Hall, Superintendent

**Scottish Fire and Rescue Service**

Group Commander M Landels  
Station Commander G Ferguson  
Area Commander H Sangster (part meeting)

**Other Councillors Present**

Councillor C McFarlane  
Councillor J Findlay

**Council Officials Present:**

Ms S Saunders, Head of Communities  
Mr K Black, Safer Communities Team Leader

**Clerk:**

Ms M Scott

**Apologies:**

SC David Morrison Prevention & Protection

**Declarations of Interest:**

None

- 1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL: POLICE, FIRE & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, 21 JUNE 23**

The minutes of the Police, Fire and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee held on 21 June 23 were approved.

## **2. SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE LOCAL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR EAST LOTHIAN – Q1 AND Q2 2023/24**

Area Commander (AC) Hilary Sangster explained the Local Fire Plan review is now complete and the review report with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Strategic Leader Team prior to submission to before going to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Board. AC Sangster is hopeful to be able to share this before the end of the year. A review of the Local Fire Plan generates the next step of developing the next Local Fire Plan which in current operating context is challenging and AC Sangster referenced the Operational Impact Change document created by the service is a public document and she will arrange for this to be shared after the meeting for Members to look at and can contact her with any questions.

Councillor Hampshire asked if this plan took into consideration the Local Development Plan in East Lothian and the growth we are delivering and if the next plan would also do this. AC Sangster explained the review is a look back at what the service said they would do and the evidence to support our work towards the KPI's including partnership working and for the development of the next Local Fire Plan the service will engage and consult with all partners, stakeholders and the public as part of the development process which will inform future focus and key performance indicators within the plan.

AC Sangster then advised the chair of the need to leave the meeting and introduced GC Mark Landels to present the SFRS performance report.

Group Commander Mark Landels, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service presented a report on the performance of the Fire and Rescue Service in East Lothian over Quarters 1 and 2 of 2023/24. 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 Trotter asked how much each call out to a deliberate fire costs the service and if the people responsible are caught are they liable for this cost. Mr Landels explained as the Fire and Reservice is an emergency service they are operationally available and whether it is a real fire or a false alarm they would attend a 999 call. He added Police Scotland do the follow up and if the case reached court then they would decide the outcome but the Fire Service do not receive any finances. Mr Landels explained the service try to reduce these types of call outs by local operational crews engaging with youth at the actual incident and also through the Community Acton Team who target areas through intelligence to promote youths not to make such calls. Mr Landels stated he would be able to find out the specific costs for Councillor Trotter and pass these on after the meeting.

In response to a question from Councillor Hampshire, Mr Landels explained if there is anyone in attendance at a deliberate fire when services arrive then staff will engage with them to explain the dangers of starting these fires to try and limit this happening again. He added that the service also visits schools to get this message across and thematic action plans deal with

seasonal risks in the summer months. Mr Landels explained Fire and Rescue also work with Police Scotland to try to identify areas to take a joint approach on speaking with individuals if the Police are also called to frequent events to hammer home the message to not start wilful fire raising.

Councillor McGinn asked if Mr Landels had any information on the numbers for retaining fire fighters in the county. Mr Landels stated the service is actively recruiting and maintain an open policy for recruitment all year round as the numbers at some stations are not as high as the service would like. He added that procedures have changed and members of the community can now come into stations to be told about the role and to try and improve recruitment we give them information on levels of fitness required and tests that will be applied during the process. Mr Landels confirmed it can be a challenge to retain fire fighters but recruitment is open all year round online and is reviewed monthly in terms of progressing candidates through each stage. He explained the Virtual Recruitment Team monitor the numbers and an update can be given on these for the whole of Scotland at the next meeting.

Grant Ferguson, Station Commander presented the East Lothian Prevention and Protection Activities including Home Fire Safety Visits, Home Fire Safety Referrals, Partnership Working/Youth Engagement, Fire Safety Support and Education and Safeguarding. Mr Ferguson explained that at the time the report was written work was underway to prepare for the Bonfire period and as with previous years was planned and coordinated with other partners including the Local Authority and Police Scotland. Mr Ferguson stated that between August and September 4 Fire Safety and Anti-social Behaviour Bonfire talks took place at Dunbar Grammar and North Berwick High Schools to try and avoid heightened anti-social behaviour. Mr Ferguson gave a summary of events over the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of November highlighting there were no acts of violence against staff within East Lothian, there were 7 call outs to bonfires and 1 officer from Haddington was sent to Edinburgh to help with issues there which showed testament to East Lothian's reliance.

In response to a question from Councillor Akhtar, Mr Ferguson explained when comparing with the previous years data it is similar. He added that he would continue to encourage our partners to make these referrals for home safety visits and to boost that process, the service could reach out to partners to make them aware of this. Mr Landels explained the Group Commander in charge of Prevention and Protection continues to actively promote this and staff are trained constantly on identifying risks within the home as well as emphasising the importance of these referrals especially for our most vulnerable.

Councillor Hampshire asked how we can engage more with young people to make it clear setting up a fire in woodlands is not a safe thing to do and if there was anything Councillors could do in partnership with Fire and Rescue through the community, wardens or protection officers and community development officers to try and identify the individuals involved to try and engage them in other activities away from having these fire. Mr Landels said he would speak with the Liaison Officer for East Lothian to pass on the offer of assistance to further reduce this type of anti-social behaviour.

#### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the report.

### **3. 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 1 and 2, 2023/24.

Chief Inspector (CI) 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 McGuire thanked Police Scotland for all their hard work behind the scenes. He commented that he found it astonishing there had been a reduction in speeding cases as this was the biggest complaint he received as a Councillor. CI Leathes stated the complaints received through the CAPR are in relation to the 20mph speed limits which the policy of the Police is not to enforce but to educate residents and the community on the use of those limits. He added if someone was speeding over and above the Police would and have taken action on this.

In response to a question from Councillor Allan, CI Leathes explained the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme he mentioned is virtual and relied on residents signing up online to receive alerts specific to your postcode. He did not think physical Neighbourhood Watch groups were particularly prevalent.

Councillor Akhtar asked what strategies were in place to enable officers to be able to spend more time on the issues detailed in the report and not on issues that are not crime related. CI Leathes explained the work Police Scotland are doing with the NHS is about trying to refer people to the correct agency but the Police will continue to attend anyone who feels unsafe or in crisis even though they are not always the best placed agency to do so. He added that if possible calls will be diverted when they come into the control room but often the Police will still be required to ensure the safety of individuals especially if they are incidents of violence. CI Leathes said officers would then determine if an individual required further support which is where the Police Concern Form Pathway would come in. He made Members aware a new pathway has been opened up to refer any drug, alcohol and mental health concerns directly to the NHS as well as existing pathways established through Adult Protection, Child Protection and third sector involved and the Domestic Abuse Team. CI Leathes stated that if other agencies could be utilised for calls received for domestic incidents that are not violent such as support on child contact then the Police would see a reduction in the need for people to involve them. Superintendent Andy Hall added there had been media reporting regarding decisions made by the Met on calls they will and wont attend in the future but he explained Police Scotland were in a different position as they legislatively set up a different focus so even though 80% of incidents they attend are not crime related they are not going to step back from those 80% but instead will look to bring in partners and look at ways to better resolve those incidents. He added police officers are not always the best people to attend the incidents they are at the moment but they are the only service on at the time some of the calls come in. Superintendent Hall stated the service has a new Chief Constable who has reiterated her commitment to community policing.

Councillor Akhtar also asked for more information on the Police office space within East Lothian. CI Leathes stated there are 6 stations within the county that have all been in existence for a long time and contain legacy cells which are no longer used but they are built into the space and are very difficult to change. He added officers increasingly require more space due to having more equipment which needs to be stored so this would need to be taken into consideration when looking at if estates are fit for purpose in 21<sup>st</sup> century policing. CI Leathes noted officers are now able to be more mobile than they used to as crimes are directly input

onto the system and there is no need to return to a nearby station as well as having access to a number of different transport options. He explained there is also a need to look at what facilities the existing 6 stations have, what they can have in the future and what can the service do better in terms of providing a better facility especially in terms of officer welfare as they need to feel safe. Superintendent Hall added that although Police Scotland are looking at the estate strategy it does not mean they will be taking officers out of the 6 stations in East Lothian it just means the buildings may be changed but would be looking at opportunities to locate them so they are available to communities.

In response to Councillor Hampshire, CI Leathes confirmed any plan Police Scotland make would be presented to the local authority and communities.

Councillor McGinn stated as the Chair of Fa'side Park the support he has received from Police Scotland has been fantastic and he greatly appreciated it. Councillor McGinn asked if it would be possible to report on the number of assaults and attacks on officers and if there was a lack of resources to be investigated more minor crimes. CI Leathes explained the pilot being referred to is in a particular part of the country and at this point in time any crime reported to the Police within East Lothian is investigated but the aim is devote officers time to crimes with the best chance of being solved, where is evidence and a positive line of enquiry to pursue. He added that more minor crimes such as shed break ins and vandalism have very few opportunities evidentially therefore the Police don't want to spend a lot of time on them. CI Leathes stated officer assaults are taken very seriously and each morning the report of any assault is taken to the Senior Management Team with a specific structure in place so any officer who has been the victim of one or numerous assaults enters into a pathway of support. He added that management will look to see if there has been a training issue or it was just the circumstances at the time. CI Leathes expressed the importance of making sure officers get physical and psychological support to ensure they do not have a fear of returning to work adding that Police Scotland had access to good counselling support and HR advisors to support officers.

In response to questions from Councillor McMillan, Superintendent Hall stated it is always nice to receive positive feedback for staff to know they are supported by the community and would encourage members of the public to continue to do so through the Command Team to pass on the message to individual officers. He added the Divisional Award Ceremony had taken place recently where outstanding work from across the division was recognised. In regards to contacting the Police, he highlighted the challenges of having a mobile number and how calls were best to be directed through the call centre but did recognise the challenges getting through on 101. Superintendent Hall confirmed completing a report with this much detail does take effort on every level but it is seen as an investment to allow discussions between Police Scotland and the Local Authority. CI Leathes echoed Superintendent Hall's comments on positive feedback.

Councillor McMillan stated that communication through a dedicated phone line or email would be useful as things like speeding issues are often reported to local Councillors instead of the Police due to the 101 system being extremely time consuming. He added if offices change then looking at systems that compensate being able to stop officers in the way in and out.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the Scrutiny 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 April 2023 to 30 September 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 2022/23. Mr Black noted during the reporting period there were 133 referrals to the mediation service, 14 live Antisocial Behaviour Orders in East Lothian, two live eviction cases before Edinburgh Sheriff Court, the Multi-agency Adult Case Monitoring Group were currently monitoring the behaviour of 56 individuals within the community who are involved in more serious, complex and persisting cases of anti-social behaviour. Mr Black made reference to the ongoing work of various groups to address anti-social behaviour and the joint agency work that took place during the reporting period with a view of refreshing the joint Police and Council Anti-social Behaviour Strategy. He stated the hope is to have the new strategy published by the Summer of 2024 following a public consultation. Mr Black reported there were 61 joint Police/Council letters sent to parents of children and young people whom the Police had identified as being present in instances and areas affected by anti-social behaviour and gave an update on recent implemented recommendations made by the service review of the Council's Protective Services division.

Councillor Akhtar acknowledged the downward trend and thanked the Anti-social Behaviour Team for all their work behind the scenes to get numbers to the level they are currently at. Councillor Akhtar wanted to know that the new Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy would be shared widely to partners and members of the local community in moving forward in different ways we can tackle anti-social behaviour. Mr Black assured Members a widespread consultation will take place both internally with partner agencies and with the wider community.

Councillor McMillan commented it was great to see the partnership working to engage young people and communities and thanked Mr Black and his team for their hard work.

Councillor Hampshire asked if there had been an improvement in the court timeframes as there had previously been a long delay. Mr Black confirmed the delay for civil cases is much less than it was during covid and the court diary for cases he is directly in have now almost returned to pre-covid levels.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

## **6. PFCSSC DRAFT ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2023/2024**

A draft annual work programme was presented to Committee.

CI Leathes highlighted the Police figures would not be available until the second week of June so requested a change of date for the next meeting.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to approve the programme.

Signed

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

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