

## The Highland Council

24 October 2013

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| Agenda Item | 10       |
| Report No   | HC/43/13 |

### Engaging with Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in their reviews of services.

#### Report by the Assistant Chief Executive

##### Summary

This report describes the nature of the engagement the Council has had and is planning for the reviews currently underway by Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

#### **1. Background**

1.1 Members will be aware of the recent proposals from:

- the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Board on its property estate, including the move to fewer controls rooms; and
- Police Scotland on the review of public service and opening hours at Police Offices and traffic warden services.

This report advises members of the engagement the Council has had with both national organisations on these matters with a view to avoiding any adverse impacts for the Highlands.

1.2 The Council's programme 'Working Together for the Highlands' has a commitment to plan for effective engagement with the new national services for police and fire and rescue and the Scottish Ambulance Service. It has two further commitments that relate to supporting the maintenance of police numbers in the Highlands and in agreeing the local plans for police and fire and monitoring performance against them.

1.3 To support engagement with and scrutiny of police and fire services, the Council established the Community Safety, Public Engagement and Equalities (CPE) Committee. The approach of the committee has been regarded as good practice by the Scottish Government's national pathfinder project and by the inspection bodies for police and fire and rescue.

1.4 Reports on organisational change have been presented by the Divisional Commander for Police and the Local Senior Officer for Fire and Rescue Services at each Committee meeting. Members of the national boards also attend the Committee meetings as observers/guests and take part in the Community Planning Partnership Board. Two board members of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service act as link members with authorities in the north of Scotland; Michael Foxley and Robin Iffla. Ian Ross attends from the Scottish Police Authority.

## **2. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Property Estate Review**

- 2.1 On 26th September the SFRS considered its intent for its property estate. This was in the context of securing savings of £4.7m per annum while ensuring a modern fit for purpose estate and protecting front line services. Among the changes being proposed there were three with potential impact on service delivery and jobs in the Highlands. These related to proposals for:
- moving from eight to two control centres and discontinuing the Inverness control centre;
  - moving to four asset resource centres (for fleet, equipment store and ICT); and
  - rationalising the office estate, including discontinuing the former HQ at Harbour Road, Inverness.
- 2.2 On being aware of the proposals, the Leader of the Council wrote to the Chair of the Board on 24<sup>th</sup> September highlighting the Council's concerns especially about the move to two control centres. He argued on the importance of staff familiarity with the area to handle emergency calls for the region and outlined the impact on the local economy should 17 control room jobs be lost. He also emphasised the need for equal importance to be given to the north of Scotland within the national fire and rescue service. The Leader has also held lengthy discussions with Michal Foxley, the SFRS Board member.
- 2.3 Members will be aware that the Board subsequently agreed to move to three control centres for Scotland, rather than two as proposed. The location of the third centre is to be determined and potential for the Inverness centre to remain operational exists. The Council will continue to make the case for promoting Inverness as the third centre. A meeting with the Chair of the Board is arranged for 21<sup>st</sup> October 2013 and a verbal up-date can be provided at the Council meeting.
- 2.4 These discussions have confirmed that Inverness has secured one of the four asset resource centres providing e.g. ICT and equipment store.

## **3. Review of Public Service and Opening Hours at Police Offices and traffic warden services**

- 3.1 In the [report](#) to the CPE Committee in September 2013 the Divisional Commander explained the background to the national review of opening hours at police offices and traffic warden services and the financial drivers for these. Members of the Committee also received a letter with this information. Members were also advised that both reviews are to be achieved in consultation with local authorities and partners.
- 3.2 The Divisional Commander advised that the public service and opening hours review had been commissioned to identify the levels of public service that occur at police offices and to determine the most efficient opening times to the public and the services provided. He highlighted that given there had been a review of the front counter service in 2012 by Northern Constabulary the Division was well placed to contribute to this review.
- 3.3 It is worth noting that this review resulted in co-locating police and Council

service point/library functions. They are found in Muir of Ord, Lairg, Gairloch, Golspie, Bettyhill and Broadford . They show good partnership working and planning for sustainable local rural services.

- 3.4 In the proposals for the 21 police offices in Highland, Police Scotland is consulting on:
- No change to 11 offices. These are in Inverness, Tain, Aness, Kyle of Lochalsh, Portree and all of those co-located with Council Service Points/libraries in Muir of Ord, Lairg, Gairloch, Golspie, Bettyhill and Broadford.
  - An increase in opening hours in 4 offices - Fort William, Aviemore and Nairn (currently open from 0800-2000hrs Monday to Sunday to being open from 0700-0000hrs 7 days a week); and Thurso (currently open 0900-1700hrs Monday to Sunday to being open 0800-1800hrs 7 days a week).
  - Reduced opening hours in 2 offices – Wick and Dingwall (currently open 0800-2000hrs Monday to Sunday to being open 0800 -1800hrs 7 days a week).
  - Having part-time arrangements in 4 offices in Mallaig and Dornoch (where cover is currently 0900-1700hrs Monday to Friday), in Glencoe (where cover is currently 0900-1300hrs Monday-Friday) and in Ullapool (where cover is currently provided 0900-1700hrs on Tuesdays and Thursdays). The pattern of part-time working is still to be determined and will be affected by the consultation with staff currently working in these offices.
- 3.5 There is on-going consultation with Police Scotland on these proposals, which are based on standardising opening hours for Police Scotland. A further meeting of the Chief Executive and the Divisional Commander is planned for the week beginning 21<sup>st</sup> October and a verbal up-date can be provided at the Council meeting.
- 3.6 The Council is engaged also in the review of traffic warden services with a view to sustaining the service.
- 3.7 It is worth noting that the consultation process that Police Scotland is undertaking is similar to the consultation process the Council uses when identifying how to meet savings targets or make changes to services.

## **4. Implications**

### **4.1 Legal implications**

The Council has a legal duty to be engaged with the national services for police and fire and rescue. It has a formal arrangement for doing this through the CPE Committee. This report highlights the other recent contact and dialogue taking place with the Council Leader and Chief Executive on the proposed service reviews. This builds on good practice in our engagement and historical partnership arrangements that have already resulted on co-

location of some services. The members of the national boards normally attending the CPE committee will be present at the next meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

#### Resource implications

The resource implications for the Council of changes arising from the traffic wardens review or for the scope of any further co-location of police counter services are being investigated. The impact on the local economy of any job losses arising from reviews has been made clear in the letter from the Leader to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Board.

#### Risk implications

Through its engagement with the national services the Council is working to reduce any risk associated with service changes to people in the region. It is worth noting that both national services have a no compulsory redundancies policy.

#### Equalities and Climate Change/Carbon Clever implications

These implications are unclear at this time, but both national services have legal duties under the equalities and climate change legislation and should be considering impact assessments.

### **5. Recommendation**

5.1 Members are asked to note that the Council is engaged fully in the reviews of services currently underway by Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. It will continue to make the case for avoiding any adverse impacts on the services for people in the Highlands while being aware of the budget challenges facing all public services at this time. An up-date of the discussions to be held in advance of the Council meeting with both national services will be provided at the Council meeting.

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Author: Carron McDiarmid, Head of Policy and Performance