

The Highland Council

19th December 2013

Agenda Item	17
Report No	HC/59/13

Update on engaging with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Police Scotland

Report by Depute Chief Executive

1. Background

- 1.1 Since the report to Council in October 2013 there has been further engagement with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and its Board over its current estates review and with Police Scotland on their proposals for traffic wardens and public counter services. This report provides an up-date for members.

2. SFRS Estates Review

- 2.1 In late October 2013 the Council Leader wrote to the Chair of the SFRS Board and the Chief Officer of SFRS with a proposal for co-located emergency control rooms in a shared building in Inverness. The proposal was for this to be the third national control room for Scotland. A meeting in Inverness of senior officers was convened, also involving Police Scotland, to explore the proposal further. To date the SFRS Board has decided to postpone its decision until late January 2014 on the location of the third control room to allow time for all options to be explored. At the Community Safety, Public Engagement and Equalities (CPE) Committee on 5th December 2013 the Board members attending from the SFRS and the Scottish Police Authority spoke in favour of the proposal.
- 2.2 As reported to members in October 2013, Inverness has secured one of the four asset resource centres providing ICT, workshop and equipment store. The Leader has written to explore the possibility of sharing workshop services with the Council.

3. Police Scotland reviews

3.1 Police public counter opening hours

The CPE committee on 5th December considered the response to Police Scotland's consultation on public counter opening hours. As reported previously, 21 contact points were in scope for review. Of these no change was proposed for 11 (including 6 co-located with Council services), and increase in hours was proposed for four, a decrease for two by 2 hours a day and a move to further part-time opening in four locations. After consideration in Ward Business meetings, the CPE committee agreed to respond noting the changes and highlighting concerns from local members regarding the move to further part-time working in two locations; Glencoe and Mallaig. Other points were fed back including concerns over the potentially disproportionate impact in remote and rural areas and the Council's on-going willingness to continue to co-locate services to help sustain services in rural areas.

- 3.2 The CPE Committee on 5th December also considered the issue of Police Scotland's decision to move away from employing traffic wardens. The Committee agreed that the Council would continue to work with Police Scotland to find a solution for the future, including seeking traffic enforcement to be decriminalised for new arrangements to be made in traffic management, including drawing on Council services. As the decriminalisation process is expected to take between 16 months and 2 years, Police Scotland will continue to have responsibility for traffic management over that period even if no traffic wardens are employed by them. At the Committee, Members expressed their disappointment in the timing and approach of Police Scotland's decision-making on this matter.

4. Implications

- 4.1 Resource implications: There may be resource implications arising from any future role for the Council in any new traffic management arrangements. These will be quantified and brought to members' attention when options for new arrangements are prepared. There may be capital and revenue resource implications for co-locating controls rooms in a shared building. These would be quantified and brought to members for consideration.

Legal implications: the Council has a right to be consulted on police and fire service arrangements in the Highlands. Both the fire and police services have duties to participate in community planning. By feeding back views on consultations and in making proposals for shared services, the Council can demonstrate it is fulfilling its duties for scrutiny of national services and in facilitating community planning.

Risk implications: There is a risk that service changes by national bodies are insensitive to local needs. The Council's engagement to date has highlighted issues of concern and proposed solutions to make service sustainable and to minimise negative impacts for Highland communities. In early 2014 the inspection bodies for fire and police services are expected to carry out inspections on how national services engage with Council and how members are engaged in the process. The Highlands are not regarded as a high risk area for the inspection; however further member development is planned in a workshop scheduled for 11th December to assist with inspection readiness.

Equalities and Climate Change/Carbon Clever implications: There are no known equalities implications arising from this report. The proposal for co-located emergency control rooms in a shared building in Inverness would retain and improve regional resilience and emergency planning associated with extreme weather events.

5. Recommendation

5.1 Members are asked to note the Council's position on reviews being conducted by the SFRS and Police Scotland, as agreed at the CPE Committee and through the proposals made by the Council Leader.