

Highland Council
Community Safety, Public Engagement & Equalities
Committee
12 June 2014

Agenda Item	12iii
Report No	CPE 23/14

Highland Local Police Area – Armed Policing Operations

**Report by the Highland Local Policing Commander– Chief Superintendent
Julian Innes**

Summary

To provide an overview to Committee Members on Armed Policing Operations within the Highland and Islands Division.

1. History

- 1.1 Historically the Firearms capability within Highland and Islands Division was provided by operational officers who were trained in the Police use of Firearms and who carried out that function on an ancillary basis to their role.
- 1.2 In 2004 this capability was enhanced by the introduction of dedicated Armed Response officers and vehicles within the Road Policing unit. These officers carried weaponry in specialist vehicles in order that deployment could be on a more spontaneous level.
- 1.3 As the emphasis on road safety and therefore road policing became increasingly more prevalent, the need to separate the two functions became more apparent. Therefore in February 2013 the Armed Policing operations unit was set up in Inverness.
- 1.4 Each Firearms incident is the subject of a structured debriefing process involving officers of all ranks with some involvement in the incident. Through the debriefing process the delay in armed officer's deployment to incidents was continually identified as a strategic risk and therefore with a view to mitigating that risk the decision was taken that from 1 March 2013 the small number of specially trained Armed Response officers would be given standing authority to carry a handgun and taser.

2. Facts and Figures

- 2.1 Armed Policing operations within Police Scotland encompass Armed Response Vehicle deployment bases across Scotland and a Tactical Firearms Unit based at Glasgow.
- 2.2 Armed Policing Training (which is separate from operations) encompasses 4 training bases in Scotland of which one is in Inverness.
- 2.3 All Firearms officers are trained to a high standard in line with national

guidelines.

- 2.4 The weaponry carried by Firearms officers are securely retained within approved holsters.
- 2.5 In the first year of Police Scotland within the Highland and Islands Division 115 incidents were considered as having potential to require an armed response. Of that number 41 incidents were given full authorisation.
- 2.6 A total of 1502 Armed Response officer hours have been spent attending firearms incidents in the last year.
- 2.7 A total of 2384 Armed Response officer hours have been spent on firearms training in the last year.
- 2.8 When not attending Firearms incidents, the Inverness based Armed Response Unit have detected 2313 crimes and offences not related to firearms or weapons use (including antisocial behaviour related crimes, road traffic offences including drink drivers, drugs offences and crimes of dishonesty). There have also been 44 incidents of people being arrested on warrant.

3 Firearms Information- Highland & Islands

- 3.1 There are 8657 Shotgun Certificates held within Division.
- 3.2 There are 6869 Firearms Certificates held within Division.
- 3.3 There are 10,853 Certificate Holders.
- 3.4 This accounts for approximately 21% of certificate holders in Scotland.
- 3.5 There are 39,933 licensed Firearms or Shotguns within the Highland and Islands.

4. Conclusion

In total about 1.6% of officers within Police Scotland are routinely armed. These highly trained officers are there to protect the public and ensure that the Highland and Islands Division and the wider Police Scotland achieve their main focus of keeping people safe. They provide an ability to respond to incidents quickly and effectively where the deployment of armed officers is assessed as appropriate.

Recommendation:

The committee is invited to discuss the above paper and to take the opportunity to view an Armed Response vehicle and meet two Armed Response officers along with the Armed Policing Inspector.

Chief Superintendent Julian Innes
Highland and Islands Divisional Commander
30 May 2014