

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Community Safety, Public Engagement and Equalities Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, on Wednesday, 30 September 2015, at 3.50 p.m.

Present:

Mr H Fraser	Mr M Reiss
Miss J Campbell	Mr I Renwick
Mr G Farlow (substitute)	Ms G Ross
Mr L Fraser (substitute)	Mr G Ross
Mrs D MacKay	Mr R Saxon
Ms A MacLean	Ms J Slater
Mrs M Paterson	

Non Members also Present:

Mr A Baxter	Mr R Laird
Mrs M Davidson	

Officials in attendance:

Ms C McDiarmid, Head of Policy and Reform, Chief Executive's Office
Mrs A Clark, Principal Policy Officer, Chief Executive's Office
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Corporate Development Service
Miss J Green, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service
Mr S Taylor, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service

Also in attendance:

Chief Superintendent J Innes, Police Scotland, Highland and Islands Divisional Commander
DS S Fitzpatrick, Police Scotland
Mr J MacDonald, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Group Manager
Ms D Abdy, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Regional Community Action Team Co-ordinator
Mr G MacLeod, Scottish Ambulance Service
Dr M E M Foxley, Board Member, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Board
Mr I Ross, Board Member, Scottish Police Authority
Ms G MacDonald, Development Assistant, Family Firm

An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.

Mr H Fraser in the Chair

Business

**1. Apologies for Absence
Liesgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Dr D Alston, Mr A Duffy, Mr H Morrison and Mr G Rimell.

**2. Declarations of Interest
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

The Committee **NOTED** the following declaration of interest:-

Item 7 – Mr G Ross (non-financial)

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 25 June 2015 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Community Safety, Public Engagement and Equalities Committee.

**Community Safety
Sàbhailteachd Phoblach**

**4. Consultations Regarding Police Services
Co-chomhairlean mu Sheirbheisean Poileis**

There had been circulated Report No CPE/12/15 dated 4 September 2015 by the Head of Policy and Reform which outlined the background to two consultations on police services and the Council's response to these. The first consultation sought views on the impact of changes to police front counter opening hours and the second, from HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland, on police call handling. The report outlined the background, the process for collating the responses and asked Members to note the responses to these separate consultations.

The Committee **NOTED** the background to the reviews into police front counter opening hours and call handling and the responses submitted as part of these reviews.

**5. Police Service Reports
Aithisgean Seirbheis Poileis**

**(a) Independent Assurance Review Police Scotland – Call Handling
Interim Report
Ath-structaradh Seòmar Smachd**

There had been circulated Report dated 31 August 2015 by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) which provided an update on the progress of the HMICS Independent Assurance Review of Police Call Handling.

In response to questions raised regarding staffing, the Divisional Commander provided reassurance that Inverness Control Centre would not be closed and confirmed that the centre would remain open as a Police National Computer (PNC) and Criminal History System (CHS) centre for Scotland and Command Base. He advised that, whilst roles might change under the centre's new function, civilian police staff jobs would be retained. He further advised that staff recruitment issues in Inverness Control Centre, which had been highlighted in the HMICS interim report, were now fully resolved. In response to concern raised regarding the reporting of 101 calls, he confirmed that, whilst there had been some instances of delays in passing calls back to the North Area Control room which had been diverted, the HMICS interim report had not identified any unreported calls.

The Chairman thanked those who had responded to the consultation and also thanked staff for the Council's submitted response.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the Independent Assurance Review Police Scotland – Call Handling Interim Report.

(b) Performance Against the Highland Local Policing Plan 2014-2017
Coileanadh mu Choinneamh Plana Obair-phoilis Ionadail na Gàidhealtachd 2014-2017

There had been circulated Report No CPE/13/15 dated 21 September 2015 by the Divisional Commander for Police which provided an update on the progress with reference to the objectives outlined in the Highland Local Policing Plan 2014-2017.

Operation CONTEST

The Divisional Commander highlighted the ongoing work in Highland with regard to the UK Governments Counter Terrorism Strategy (CONTEST) and advised that a Member training session on CONTEST would be organised.

Performance

The Divisional Commander highlighted the main points of the performance report, including that, whilst there had been an increase in overall crime reporting during the period 1 April to 31 August 2015, crime in the Highlands remained relatively low when compared over a five year average. He advised that incidents of hate crimes had been under-reported for a number of years and expressed the view that a recent increase in reporting could be viewed as a positive outcome. He praised the work of Women's Aid in supporting victims of sexual and domestic abuse and for giving them the confidence to report incidents to the police. He drew attention to analytical evidence provided by police staff which had shown an increase in violence on pay weekends and he advised that as the forthcoming weekend fell within this pattern of evidence, extra officers would be deployed. He also drew attention to an emerging pattern in shoplifting whereby individuals were stealing items in order to feed themselves; work with shops which were known to be targeted was

ongoing to address this type of crime. More enforcement activity had taken place with regard to road safety and whilst targets were being met, he expressed disappointment that the increased activity had not seen a reduction in motorists offending.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- concern was expressed at the length of time taken for Scene of Crime Officers to attend house break-ins in the Lochaber area following the initial request to the Scottish Police Authority;
- whilst it was acknowledged that terrorism was not a major issue, within Highland it was the perceived threat of terrorism which was of concern;
- in welcoming police officer attendance at community council meetings, it was suggested that more relevant and targeted statistics be provided by officers attending those meetings. However, concern was expressed at the lack of attendance at Muir of Ord Community Council meetings;
- a request was made for further information on conviction rates in order gauge if these were also increasing;
- in response to concerns regarding the increase in sexual offending, the importance of providing reassurance to parents that their children were safe was emphasised;
- the use of social media to spread malicious rumours was damaging to individuals and the amount of officer time devoted to addressing this was acknowledged;
- concern was expressed at the intelligence received by officers that people were resorting to stealing food in order to feed themselves and it was suggested that information should be provided on the support available, such as foodbanks, in order to prevent repeat crimes;
- the work undertaken with Trading Standards to assist vulnerable people from bogus trades people who would otherwise be too embarrassed to report them was emphasised;
- reassurance was sought, and received that roads would be reopened as soon as possible following major accidents, and that ambulance and emergency services would be given priority if required to travel through a road closure to attend an emergency; and
- the reduction in road deaths and serious injuries was welcomed.

In response to the above points and to questions raised, Members were provided with information on matters relating to: the availability of specifically trained Scene of Crime Officers in the Highlands; an increase in reporting of crime; the launch of Operation Monarda to help prevent harm to vulnerable and older people from bogus workmen; the process involved in undertaking and reporting stop searches; work currently being undertaken nationally to assess the impact of fatal road crashes; an increase in sexual offending through the internet; detection of speeding and road traffic offences; analytical evidence in terms of the pattern of violence during pay weekends; and the provision of more appropriate statistics to community councils following the introduction of the Division's

new IT system. The Divisional Commander also gave a commitment to take forward actions relating to police officer attendance at Muir of Ord Community Council and to draw individuals' attention to existing services and support available, such as foodbanks, as an alternative to shoplifting.

Mr Ian Ross provided an update on the activities of the Scottish Police Authority (SPA), during which he advised that he recently attended a Policing Summit organised by the Cabinet Secretary which looked at issues surrounding scrutiny and accountability. He summarised the key messages arising from the Summit, including the importance of local scrutiny; policing should reflect local needs and circumstances; and the importance of strong links between local and national structures. He expressed the view that the strong messages arising from the Summit would be reflected in the approach adopted by the new Chief Constable and highlighted the Cabinet Secretary's announcement that the Chief Constable would be required to participate in local scrutiny sessions. Following issues around communication and engagement, protocol had recently been agreed between the SPA and Police Scotland to ensure early and effective consultation prior to any decisions being taken with regard to police policy. He highlighted that a review of Governance of Policing led by Andrew Flanagan, Chairman of the SPA would shortly commence and that Members would be asked to contribute towards this. He acknowledged the good practice in Highland, in particular the strong and influential communication with national structures, as demonstrated by the Highland's response to armed policing and the subsequent change in policy, and commended the strong links the area had with the Divisional Commander.

Following discussion, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the performance report against the Highland Local Policing Plan Objectives, April 2015 - August 2015, and **AGREED** that a Member Training Session on the UK Governments Counter Terrorism Strategy (CONTEST) would be organised; and
- ii. **AGREED** that an invitation be made to the Scottish Courts Services Board to attend a future meeting of the Committee to provide information on conviction rates in the Highlands.

In accordance with Standing Order 18, with the consent of the meeting, item 6(c) was taken at this point.

6. Fire and Rescue Service Reports Aithisgean na Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn

(c) Community Engagement Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Chom-pàirteachas Poblach

There had been circulated Report No CPE/16/15 dated 18 September 2015 by the Local Senior Officer for Fire and Rescue which provided Committee Members with an overview of Scottish Fire and Rescue Service activities aligned with legislative responsibilities and partnership agreed outcomes contained in the Highland SOA 2013 – 2019. These activities included the delivery of free home fire safety visits (HFSV) aimed

at reducing dwelling house fires, local partnership activities targeting the most vulnerable within our communities, supporting road safety intervention and the reduction of fire related antisocial behaviour through delivery of targeted youth engagement activities.

A presentation was also made by Ms Gemma MacDonald, Development Assistant with Family Firm, who had participated in the Hi-Fires initiative in Wick. Hi-Fires was a 10 week activity programme which provided opportunities for young people at risk of offending, dealing with behavioural issues or undergoing particular challenges in their life. Ms MacDonald explained how she had benefited from the course in that, she had gained confidence, her attitude had improved and she had learned many valuable life lessons.

The Committee expressed their appreciation to Ms MacDonald for her extremely informative presentation and expressed the benefits of receiving direct feedback from a care experienced person. It was evidence that the Family Firm scheme, which provided workplace experiences for looked after children, was now delivering and it was highlighted that more engagement with looked after children in schemes such as Hi-Fires would enhance their employment opportunities. In addition, the commitment made by Community Planning Partners to employ care leavers was emphasised and it was felt that the Hi-Fires scheme demonstrated that they were valuable employees.

The Committee recognised the value of the Hi-Fires scheme, and if Members had not already done so, attendance at a local session was recommended. Although the costs and resources required to operate the course were recognised, this was far outweighed by the benefits achieved by participants and the community.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and the contents of the report.

5. Police Service Reports Aithisgean Seirbheis Poileis

(c) National Child Abuse Investigation Unit Aonad Sgrùdaidh Nàiseanta airson Droch Dhiol air Cloinn

A presentation was made by DS Stuart Fitzpatrick during which he set out the background in respect of the formation of the National Child Abuse Investigation Unit (NCAUI); explained the Unit's remit within Police Scotland and Unit referral process; and provided some background information in respect of the Unit based at Inverness.

In view of time constraints, the Chairman recommended that this item be added to a future agenda to enable more in depth discussion of this important issue. This approach was welcomed as it was felt that although awareness of child abuse was improving, there were still many cold audit trails being pursued and the work of the Unit in this regard was appreciated. However, there was also a need to consider what happens beyond the role of the Police and the overall impact on society.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** that the National Child Abuse Investigation Unit be put on the agenda for a future meeting.

6. Fire and Rescue Service Reports
Aithisgean na Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn

The Committee **AGREED** that items 6(a) and 6(b) be taken together.

- (a) Quarterly Performance Report for Quarter 1 2015/16**
Aithisg Dèanadais Ràitheil airson Ràith 1 2015/16
- (b) Unwanted Fire Alarm Management Update**
Cunntas às Ùr mu Rianachd Innealan-Rabhaidh Teine gun Iarraidh

There had been circulated Report No CPE/14/15 dated 14 September 2015 by the Local Senior Officer for Fire and Rescue, together with accompanying quarterly performance report (QPR), which provided detail on Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) performance across a range of Intervention, Prevention and Protection activities for Quarter 1, 2015/16.

There had also been circulated Report No CPE/15/15 dated 19 September 2015 by the Local Senior Officer for Fire and Rescue which provided an overview of Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS) as well as the operational activity within the Highland area attributable to UFAS and the work being undertaken by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and local personnel to reduce the impact on the service and local communities.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The reduction in chimney fires was welcomed and it was assumed that this had been assisted by the installation of wood burning stoves;
- The preventative approach of free home fire safety visits was welcomed but further promotion was encouraged in order to increase take-up of this valuable service;
- Recruitment of retained fire fighters had improved and officers had indicated that they were heartened by the high standard of applicants many of which had been ex-army or services. In addition, the Community Planning Partnership had recently held discussions on public agencies releasing staff during the day to become trained firefighters;
- The importance of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service within the local community was highlighted and the references to creating a flexible service were particularly welcomed as it was recognised that this would create sustainability of local services and help communities to feel safe and confident. It was proposed that a joint press release be issued summarising the retained recruitment process; future pilot schemes; and flexible approach being taken to ensure sustainability of services in local communities; and

- In the event of a cardiac arrest, the likelihood of death in Scotland outwith urban areas significantly increased and therefore the Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest pilot was welcomed. Although many communities were skilled on the use of defibrillators, having the specialist support of the Fire Service, which would also help communities enhance their response skills, was invaluable.

The Chairman then invited Dr M Foxley, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Board Member, to comment during which he advised that the Service was currently addressing recruitment issues and the joining time had been reduced from 16 months to 16 weeks and work also continued in respect of improving the gender balance and employing more female staff. The support of the Community Planning Partnership to encourage members of the workforce to train as retained fire fighters was welcomed and action had been taken to enable training to be undertaken locally with major facilities being built in the Western Isles, Orkney and Highland.

He explained that the Retained Duty System (RDS) had a unique footprint in the Highlands and the intention was to do more such as the Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest and the intention train one million people in Scotland to improve the current survival rate of 4%. He explained that mouth to mouth CPR had now been replaced with cardiac compression and there would be a mass roll out of this training through the RDS. Discussions were also ongoing with the ambulance service about doing more in respect of rural health.

Continuing he advised that the Strategic Plan, which should have been out for consultation, had been deferred. He urged that consideration be given now to the Strategic Plan in terms of future service requirements, particularly with regard to retained stations in remote areas, and would it be feasible to retain the current footprint in view of austerity and reducing budgets. In terms of consideration to doing more, he highlighted that this included Firefighters at harbours/sea, emergency towing vessels, and taking the lead in rescue. Consideration was also being given to targeting home fire safety visits and the need to improve data sharing of those at risk in order that a proactive approach could be taken. He also highlighted that fire deaths included fire suicides and the need to reduce this awful statistic as well as doing more to improve community resilience and safety for the future.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the SFRS service delivery and performance contained within the report and attached QPR for Quarter 1, 2015/16;
- ii. **NOTED** the content of the report on Unwanted Fire Alarm Management Update; and
- iii. **AGREED** that a joint press release be issued summarising the retained recruitment process and future pilot schemes.

7. **Scottish Ambulance Service Quarterly Report
Aithisg Seirbheis Charbadan-eiridinn na h-Alba**

Declaration of Interest – Mr G Ross declared a non-financial interest on the grounds that a family member was a frequent user in the falls category but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated performance report by the Scottish Ambulance Service for the Highland area for the period May to September 2015.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the rise in cancelled Patient Transport Service Journeys was disappointing, particularly considering it impacted rural communities more, but the work undertaken to improve the performance was pleasing; and
- in terms of the geographic area to be covered it was felt some performance targets were unrealistic and the Scottish Ambulance Service were commended for the high quality of service provided and for the figures achieved.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

**Public Engagement
Com-pàirt Phoblach**

8. **Community Planning Board – Minutes
Bòrd Dealbhadh Choimhearsnachd – Geàrr-chunntas**

There were circulated and **NOTED** minutes of meeting of the Community Planning Board held on 3 June 2015, which were approved by the Board at its meeting on 11 September 2015.

**Equalities
Co-ionannachdan**

9. **Employee Survey: Fairer Highland Elements
Suirbhidh Luchd-obrach: Clàr Gàidhealtachd nas Cothromaiche**

There had been circulated Report No CPE/17/15 dated 22 September 2015 by the Head of Policy and Reform which provided a summary of the analysis of a set of questions that measures employees' views of the Fairer Highland element of the Council's 7th Employee Survey.

The Committee **AGREED** that this item be deferred to the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 6.12 p.m.