

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
POLICE, FIRE & RESCUE AND SAFER COMMUNITIES BOARD

MINUTE of MEETING of the POLICE, FIRE &
RESCUE AND SAFER COMMUNITIES
BOARD held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER,
COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS, NEWTOWN ST.
BOSWELLS on 15 November 2013 at 09.30am

Present:- Councillors D Moffat (Chairman), S Aitchison, G Logan, A Nicol, G Turnbull,
Mr J Raine, NHS Borders, Mrs J Mulloy, Scottish Borders Housing Network, Mr R
Strachan, Community Justice Authority, Mr G Higgs, Voluntary Sector.

Apologies: Councillors B Herd, R Stewart. Mr G Bell, Business Sector.

In Attendance: Chief Superintendent J McDiarmid, Police Scotland, Chief Inspector A Clark, Police
Scotland, Chief Inspector K Simpson, Safer Communities Team, GC J Mallin, Scottish
Fire & Rescue Service, LSO P Heath, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, D Scott, Senior
Consultant SBC, B Young, Environment and Infrastructure, P Bolson, Democratic
Services Officer.

WELCOME

1. The Chairman welcomed Mr F Gallop of HMIC and Mr B McQueen of the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service Board to the meeting.

MINUTE

2. There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the meeting held on 2 August 2013.

DECISION

APPROVED the Minute.

COLD CALLING

3. In response to the Board's initial enquiry regarding cold calling, Paul Wheelhouse, MSP had forwarded a letter from the Minister for Community Safety explaining the Scottish Government's views on this issue. This letter was read out to the Board.

DECISION

NOTED.

REVIEW OF POLICE COUNTERS

4. A letter from Chief Superintendent McDiarmid was received by the Chief Executive on 1 October, 2013 setting out proposals for Police Counters in the Scottish Borders. The Leader of the Council had responded and this letter was read out to the Board. It noted that a series of changes would be made to the opening hours of a number of police stations across the Scottish Borders and also the closure of police counters at Melrose, Lauder, Coldstream and Selkirk. The Leader emphasised the Council's disappointment that police counters were to close in these towns but noted that the buildings would continue to be used for operational purposes. The Leader went on to say that there was an opportunity for the public reporting of matters requiring police assistance to be done through Council Contact Centres and other partner outlets and that a working paper was being prepared in close co-operation with the police services to look at possible options, the intention being for this

paper to be discussed with community planning partners and eventually be presented to the Scottish Borders Community Planning Board for approval.

**DECISION
NOTED.**

FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE STRATEGIC PLAN

5. A letter was received from Alex Clark, Depute Chief Officer of the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS) thanking the Board for its considered response to the consultation on the SFRS strategic plan. DCO Clark went on to confirm their commitment to partnership working and how that partnership activity would be shaped by the needs of each local area, including the cross-border activity referenced in the Board's response. The Board's comments on sharing service transformation issues with partners to allow for the potential of local and innovative solutions was particularly welcomed.

**DECISION
NOTED.**

PROGRESS REPORTS

Police

6. There had been circulated copies of the Police Progress report covering the period April to September 2013. The report detailed the figures for the six Priority areas to date and compared them to the figures for the same period in 2012/13. Chief Superintendent McDiarmid and Chief Inspector Clark highlighted key areas of the report and noted that the detection rates for crimes of domestic abuse had increased by 359% (from 61 to 280) during a period when this area of criminality had been given increased focus. Increases in detection rates for sexual abuse of 79% (from 29 to 52) and hate crime, of which race-related crime is the most prevalent issue were also recorded. It was also pleasing that there had been a reduction in Anti-Social Behaviour incidents over the period that included the summer months. It was reported that the level of Violent Crime had increased by almost 40% in the year to date and that this figure included one culpable homicide related to a driving accident. The number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads had reduced in two areas, namely by 50% for fatal injury and by a third for children under the age of 16. People seriously injured on the roads increased by just over 18%, this being attributed in part to the figure included twelve casualties from two collisions. Further figures showed that £154.7k had been recorded in cash seizures and restraints under the Proceeds of Crime Act. Intelligence-led positive stop and searches had increased both for detection of offensive weapons and drugs, demonstrating that the correct people were being targeted by these searches. It was explained that the decrease of almost 70% in the number of people detected for supplying drugs was mainly due to 54 individuals being detected in the previous year under Operation Goal, thus increasing the detection figure substantially. Without this specific Operation being in place, the figures for the two years to date would have been more equitable. In response to a question regarding the number of repeat Anti-Social Behaviour incidents/leading on to further incidents, Chief Inspector Simpson explained that there was a structured process in place and confirmed that every time an individual appeared/reappeared, this was recorded as a separate incident. Chief Superintendent McDiarmid and Chief Inspector Clark answered Members' questions and agreed that CI Clark would include benchmarking information on Road Safety into future Annual Reports.

**DECISION
(a) NOTED the report.**

(b) AGREED:

- (i) that a presentation be made to the Board on the work of the Wildlife Crime Officer; and**
- (ii) that a contextual note be circulated to the Board on the role of the British Transport Police as it relates to the Borders Railway.**

Fire and Rescue Service

7. There had been circulated copies of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Progress Report covering the period July to September 2013. LSO Heath and GC Mallin highlighted the main points in the report and it was noted that, of the six key indicators, only "Other Primary Fires" demonstrated a decrease in the figures. One complaint by a member of the public was recorded and following investigation, feedback was provided to the complainant. With regard to Objective 1: To reduce the occurrence of road traffic collisions resulting in death and injury, it was emphasised that only Road Traffic Accidents (RTAs) to which the Fire & Rescue Service were called could be included in the report. Objective 2 related to the occurrence of special service incidents resulting in death and injury and it was noted that four attendances were required to enable access so that the Ambulance staff could deliver a service. It was further noted that a number of attendances were to older people living alone and it was therefore important that the Home Safety Programme continued and work with the Home Safety Team developed to increase early intervention. Objective 4 related to other primary fires which included agricultural vehicles and barns and work with the NFU to look at ways of reducing the figures in this category was scheduled for 2014. GC Mallin gave a brief of the Analysis of Audit Activity and explained that visits were not always evenly spread across the Borders as the highest risk areas are visited first. LSO Heath and GC Mallin confirmed that there had been a delay in the production of a safety leaflet for caravan users but that progress was now being made and it was noted that the leaflet would be a useful addition to an exhibition for Gypsy Travellers scheduled for 2014. Discussion took place and questions were raised regarding RTA figures and the criteria used for analysis of the data. Mr McQueen explained that the objective of Central Government was to use the intelligence gleaned from each accident to improve road safety collectively. On the question of whether there was a need for an Audit to be carried out of all caravan sites, GC Mallin confirmed that the Licensing Authority would have to refer this to the Fire & Rescue Service to initiate such an Audit. GC Mallin updated Members on recruitment and confirmed that the most recent drive had been disappointing, particularly in Berwickshire but that staffing levels were being maintained. Mr McQueen confirmed that the Scottish Fire & Rescue Board had discussed proposals for changes to the status of the Gullane site at its meeting in September 2013 and the economic impact of such change as well as the development of Newbridge and it was noted that further information would be provided when available. LSO Heath explained the current status of the long standing dispute on proposed changes to pensions and it was noted that the results of a new national ballot were awaited.

DECISION

- (a) NOTED the report.**
- (b) AGREED that an item on the Community Safety Engagement Toolkit be included on the Agenda for the next meeting of the Board.**

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11.10am for coffee and reconvened at 11.25am

Safer Communities

8. There had been circulated copies of the Safer Communities Performance Report covering the period from April to September 2013. Chief Inspector Simpson highlighted the key points in the report and noted that the DAAS Service had received 49 referrals from males during its first year of operation. Chief Inspector Simpson indicated that it was an area of concern that 2 out of 5 people believed that it was a woman's responsibility to leave the place of violence. In the category of Anti-Social Behaviour, the reduction in the number of youth-related incidents had reduced by 16.5%. The number of people recorded as thinking that various forms of anti-social behaviour is very or fairly common had also reduced, showing very positive results. It was noted that of those people who had witnessed anti-social behaviour but had not reported it, the main reason was fear of reprisal. The report indicated that the number of residents who reported people being drunk or rowdy in a public place was common or fairly common had dropped by 4%, and residents who stated that drug use or dealing was very common or common in their area had reduced by 3%. Under the category of Home Injury Prevention, it was reported that the number of emergency hospital admissions for people of 75+ where a fall was the main reason had increased and the NHS Falls Prevention Group had been made aware of this. Emergency hospital admissions for children under 5 due to a home accident had dropped, showing very positive results in the year to date. The report indicated that performance against the baseline under Roads Injury Prevention – Strategic Objective 2 was of some concern and highlighted that the Road Safety Working Group had been made aware of this. Chief Inspector Simpson also drew attention to the reduction in the number of motorcyclists killed and seriously wounded. Members' questions were answered and it was noted that the Safer Communities Team continued to work closely with the Education and Lifelong Learning Department in relation to reducing youth crime.

DECISION

NOTED the report.

SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE LOCAL PLAN

9. There had been circulated copies of a briefing paper providing Members with an update to work in progressing the 2014-17 Local Fire & Rescue Service Plan for the Scottish Borders. LSO Heath explained the background to the report and advised that under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 that as soon as was reasonably practicable following the approval of a Scottish Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS) Strategic Plan, a Local Fire & Rescue Service Plan would be prepared and presented for approval to each Local Authority Area. It was noted that the SFRS Strategic Plan was currently laid before Parliament. The briefing paper gave a detailed update and progress report on how this Local Plan was being developed and noted four strategic aims which set the context for the Plan, and the Appendix to the briefing paper listed the five priorities which had been provisionally identified for inclusion in the Local Plan. LSO Heath stated that the consultation process would commence with a draft Local Plan being produced for December 2013 with a consultation period of 12 weeks to follow. It was possible that the Local Plan could be finalised in April 2014 although LSO Heath commented that it might take longer for the process to complete. It was noted that there was no reference to flooding. LSO Heath indicated that work would be carried out to establish Ward Profiles and confirmed that the Action Plan would identify what would happen locally and how. LSO Heath was asked to circulate a list of the organisations that would be consulted on the development of the Local Fire & Rescue Plan.

DECISION

NOTED the report.

UPDATE ON POLICE AND FIRE & RESCUE REFORM

10. Chief Superintendent McDiarmid reported that the consultation period for consideration of services that local communities wanted ended on 24 November 2013, and confirmed that Audit Scotland was currently working to ensure that governance structures were in place. It was noted that Scrutiny Boards had been in place from day one of Police Scotland. Plans were already in place for a Strategic Budget for future years and Chief Superintendent McDiarmid indicated that savings would come from “slimming down” of areas such as administration and HR units. Further work was progressing in relation to areas such as roads policing, anti-social behaviour, review of shift-working to ensure the right level of officers on duty at the right times. Chief Superintendent McDiarmid also indicated that a Campaign Against Violence (Operation Tinsel) would take place throughout the Christmas period. This was a multi-agency campaign and was directed towards domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour. The launch of the campaign was scheduled for 1 December 2013 and could be followed on Twitter. Work to identify under-age drinking, eg at school dances would also be progressed. Further updates would be presented to the next meeting of the Board. Questions were raised regarding the amount of savings that required to be made and Chief Superintendent McDiarmid confirmed that savings required up to the end of March 2014 were already in place but future savings had yet to be agreed. She also indicated that local savings had been achieved by the merging of Divisions whilst the national savings were due to ten organisations merging into one. Further discussion took place and Members’ questions were answered.
11. LSO Heath reported on the Divisional Annual Fire Statistics which were published in October 2013. Fires in Scotland were down by 18%. There had been 11,000 primary fires, 50% of these being domestic dwelling fires with one third being recorded as not having a smoke alarm installed. 61% of these fires were associated with cooking, and LSO Heath confirmed that these statistics mirrored the national trend. An agreement was now in place and work was ongoing to establish cross-Border protocols to enable Scottish and English Fire & Rescue Authorities to support each other in emergency situations. The Get Ready for Winter Campaign was well underway and a review of specialist resources and assets was in progress to ensure that these resources were in the correct places. LSO Heath reported that staff matching was in progress and the benefits could now be seen. He stated that there were no immediate plans for demanning but this could not be ruled out as a means to save in the future. Further discussion took place and Mr McQueen explained the process for reaching agreement on future budgets and emphasised that there was no legal or mandatory requirement to maintain staffing levels. LSO Heath stated that there would be no compulsory job losses and noted that fire fighter gaps have been filled on occasion by recruiting from back office function staff.

DECISION

NOTED the current position.

GYPSY TRAVELLERS SITE MANAGERS’ ASSOCIATION

12. Mr Higgs gave a brief update on the meeting held on 25 September in Innerleithen. Mr Higgs thanked everyone who had attended the meeting, and advised that this had been the first visit to the Borders for a number of managers who had found it to be a positive experience.

DECISION

NOTED.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

13. Dates for the following two meetings of the Board would be Friday 14 February 2014 and Friday 9 May 2014.

**DECISION
NOTED.**

PRIVATE BUSINESS DECISION

AGREED under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the business detailed in the Appendix to this Minute on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Act.

SUMMARY OF PRIVATE BUSINESS

Consultation on the future of Traffic Warden provision

1. A report on the future position of the Traffic Warden Service in the Scottish Borders was discussed by the Board.