

# SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

MINUTE of Meeting of the POLICE, FIRE & RESCUE AND SAFER COMMUNITIES BOARD held in Council HQ, Newtown St Boswells on Friday, 15th May, 2015 at 9.30 am

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Present:- Councillors D. Moffat (Chairman), B. Herd, A. J. Nicol, G. Turnbull, R. Stewart; Mr G. Higgs, Voluntary Sector.

Apologies:- Councillor S. Aitchison; Mr H. Walti. A. Perry, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Ms F. Young, Lothian & Borders Community Justice Authority.

In Attendance:- Chief Superintendent G. Imery, Police Scotland; Chief Inspector A. McLean, Police Scotland; Chief Inspector P. Clark, Safer Communities Team Manager; Mr P. Rooney, Scottish Police Authority; Group Manager A. Girrity, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service; Inspector J. Scott, Safer Communities Team; Mr D. Cressey (Service Director Strategy & Policy), Mr D. Scott (Senior Policy Adviser SBC), Ms S. Smith (Communities & Partnership Manager, SBC); Ms K. Mason, Democratic Services Officer.

1. **WELCOME**

The Chairman extended a welcome to those present.

2. **MINUTE**

2.1 There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the meeting held on 13 February 2015.

**DECISION**

**APPROVED the Minute.**

2.2 **MATTERS ARISING**

(a) With reference to paragraph 5 (b)(i) of the Minute, Chief Inspector McLean advised that ages were not recorded in relation to the statistics for older people in the age hate crime category.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

(b) With reference to paragraph 5(b)(ii) of the Minute, Inspector Scott advised that the flyer relating to SB Alert had been issued to Members.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

(c) With reference to paragraph 7(b) of the Minute, Mr Scott advised that a representative from the Ambulance Service would be invited to a future meeting to give a presentation on their operations and how they linked in with Police Scotland, Fire and Rescue Service and the NHS.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

(d) With reference to paragraph 11(a) of the Minute, Chief Supt Imery advised that it was difficult to quantify the contribution of CCTV to criminal proceedings, and

to the wider prevention of crime and community reassurance. Criminal Justice colleagues confirmed that the highest volume of productions, i.e. evidence for court, came from CCTV recorded evidence, and it was a fundamental tool for all investigating officers. One of the first actions on all crime reports was to confirm that CCTV had been checked. There was no central monitoring facility for CCTV in the Scottish Borders, and officers interrogated systems locally to glean evidence for criminal cases. There was such a centralised monitoring facility in Edinburgh, and the data collated there gave an indication of the value of CCTV. Over the calendar year 2014, the central monitoring facility logged 15,255 incidents, and monitored 1,618 arrests, 860 of which resulted directly through the actions of the central monitoring facility. The facility received 4,389 requests from officers to view CCTV, and prepared 1,654 court and further enquiry packages. No figures were available from the Crown and Procurator Fiscal Service to show the number of convictions resulting from CCTV evidence. It was a fact that criminal proceedings had been taken against offenders in cases of serious violence where the victim was unwilling to report the crime, but where the offender and his/her actions could be seen on CCTV. Most commonly, the CCTV formed part of the evidence in a case, and could lead to an offender pleading guilty at an early stage, saving victims and witnesses from giving evidence in court and reducing the impact on court and police time. It was noted that Members of the Teviot and Liddesdale Area Forum had agreed that quality of life funding be used to upgrade and extend the existing CCTV system in Hawick. This was now housed in a suitable building which the Police had access to 24 X 7 by means of a punch code entry system enabling them to extract the necessary information.

**DECISION  
NOTED.**

- (e) With reference to paragraph 12(b)(i) of the Minute, Members were advised that Councillors Moffat, Turnbull and Herd together with Mr Scott had visited Bilston Glen on 13 May 2015. The visit had been first class, and Members noted that there had been huge progress made over the last few weeks. Background information was given on the visit in relation to the operation of the centre and an updated report would be presented to the Board in 3 months' time because the establishment was not fully complemented in relation to staffing at the present time. A suggestion was made that staff from Bilston Glen attend a meeting of Council to give a power point presentation on the operation of the facility but it was agreed that a more appropriate way forward would be for an open invitation for any Councillors or colleagues, to visit Bilston Glen in person. Anyone wishing to do so should liaise with Chief Supt. Imery or Mr Scott to enable arrangements to be made for a visit. The Chairman encouraged Members to take up this offer.

**DECISION  
NOTED.**

- (f) With reference to paragraph 12(b)(ii) of the Minute, Inspector Scott advised that a consultation with stakeholders in relation to by-laws in the Scottish Borders was ongoing. After Scottish Ministers had been consulted he would bring a report on by-laws to a future meeting.

**DECISION  
NOTED that Inspector Scott would bring back a report on by-laws in the Scottish Borders to a future meeting.**

- (g) With reference to paragraph 12(b)(iii) Chief Supt. Imery advised that since the introduction of Police Scotland, arrangements for Diversity Lay

Advisors/Community Advisors remained as they were under legacy police forces. The process was reviewed by the national Safer Communities Unit with a view to identifying existing arrangements and creating a national scheme. The Lothian and Borders Police scheme operated under an arrangement with Edinburgh City Council. On 13 April 2015 a letter was issued to Lay Advisors across Scotland, including those in the Scottish Borders, inviting them to be part of the national scheme for Community Advisors. Once all the replies were received, any gaps in specialities or geography would be identified and efforts made to recruit and train additional Advisors accordingly. In the meantime, current arrangements continued to apply.

## **DECISION NOTED.**

### **PROGRESS REPORTS**

#### **3. POLICE**

- 3.1 There had been circulated copies of the Police Progress report covering the period January 2015 to March 2015. The report detailed the figures for the six Priority areas to date and compared them to the figures for the same period in 2013/14. Chief Inspector McLean highlighted key areas of the report and noted that there had been a reduction of 6.7% in the detection rate for Groups 1 – 5 crimes. He went on to detail the figures in the context of the report and noted that Adults at Risk referrals made to partner agencies had increased by 27.4%, from 1,267 to 1,614 compared to the same period in 2013/14. The number of Domestic Abuse initial checks that had been conducted within 24 hours had increased by 2.7%. Chief Inspector McLean also advised Members that the number of common assaults compared to the previous year had decreased by 15.8% and that this trend was mirrored across crimes of violence as a whole in the Scottish Borders, equating to 135 fewer victims in the area compared to the previous year. The report noted that there had been an increase of 2.2 % in the number of Antisocial Behaviour incidents. Chief Inspector McLean reported that there had been a welcome decrease of 21.8% in the reporting of hate crime compared to the same period in 2013/14. The report detailed the trends in relation to the type of prejudice and noted that incidents for Race crime had reduced from 53 to 43, Homophobic had decreased from 18 to 13, and there had been 1 report of Transgender crime and Disability crime was the same. There had been a decrease of 1 incident of Religious Hatred compared to the same reporting period last year. In relation to Stop and Searches for drugs, the report noted a decrease of 0.5% in the proportion of positive searches. It was noted that visits to Licensed Premises had reduced by 22.5% this year to date and this was mainly attributed to the focus of activity in this area in the previous year. It was encouraging that the figures in relation to making our roads safer had decreased. There had been a reduction in the number of people seriously injured from 66 to 62 and the number of people killed in road traffic incidents had increased by 75%. The report noted that no children had been killed or seriously injured and this was extremely encouraging. Members noted that there had been an increase in the number of people detected for drug supply over the same period in 2014/15. The report identified an increase of £733,777 in the amount of Assets referred for Restraint. Both housebreakings to dwelling houses and thefts of motor vehicles had decreased by 17.3% (21 fewer victims) and 20.5% (16 fewer victims) respectively.
- 3.2. Chief Insp. Imery referred to the impact the Commonwealth Games and the Referendum had had on Police Scotland. Moving into year three of the new structure she was optimistic that local areas would have more autonomy and more bespoke Policing for different parts of the Country.
- 3.3. A request was made for statistics relating to race crimes to be split from hate crimes for eastern Europeans, and it was agreed that a breakdown of figures would be presented and embedded in future reports. In response to questions raised about tackling serious and organised crime with the assets referred for restraint, Members were advised that by the time monies went through the system all monies retained were reinvested through the

Scottish Communities Budget. The Chairman advised that correspondence had been sent to the Scottish Government expressing concern in that cash seizures should be returned to local communities, it was indicated a check would be made to see if a response had come from the Scottish Government.

- 3.4. Concern was expressed in relation to the significant VAT bill facing Police Scotland and it was agreed that Councillor Turnbull, on behalf of the Board, write to Mr Mundell MP and the Chairman, Councillor Moffat to make contact with Calum Kerr MP on behalf of the Board asking that the VAT bill be abandoned.

#### **DECISION**

**(a) NOTED the report.**

**(b) AGREED that:**

- (i) that figures would be presented and embedded in future reports showing a breakdown of figures for race crimes and hate crimes for eastern Europeans; and**
- (ii) a letter from Councillor Turnbull on behalf of the Board be sent to Mr Mundell MP and the Chairman to make contact with Mr Calum Kerr MP on behalf of the Board expressing concern about Police Scotland's VAT payments and for these to be discontinued.**

#### **4. FIRE & RESCUE**

There had been circulated copies of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Performance Report covering the period April 2014 to March 2015. In summarising the report, Group Manager Girrity advised that with regard to Priority 1: Reduction of Dwelling Fires, the SFRS had attended 84 dwelling fires during this reporting period, this represented a 27% decrease from the previous year. Priority 2: Reduction in Fire Fatalities and Casualties, the report noted that there had been no fire fatalities during the quarter however 15 people had been recorded as fire related casualties, this was a 31% reduction in comparison to the same reporting period last year. Priority 3: Reduction of Deliberate Fire Setting indicated an increase of twelve from the previous year and it was noted that the trend line per 10,000 head of population regarding this type of incident continued to be well below that of the East Service Delivery area and Scotland as a whole. The main causes continued to be grass/scrubland and refuse. One incident involved serious damage to kennels at Hawick and resulted in a partnership approach to anti-social behaviour issues in that particular area. Priority 4: Reduction in Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) indicated that the SFRS attended 92 incidents during the quarter; this represented a 21% increase in comparison to the same period in the previous year. There had been 40 RTC related casualties in this period; tragically this included 4 fatalities recorded in the months of November and December 2014. Priority 5 related to the Reduction of Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals and it was noted that there had been 215 Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS) during this quarter, representing an increase in 32 incidents compared to Quarter 4 in 2014. Discussions took place in regard to sheltered housing complexes and Group Manager Girrity advised that a SFRS local liaison authority officer worked closely with local crews and other partners to ensure that vulnerable persons were identified and the appropriate actions were taken.

#### **DECISION**

**NOTED the report.**

#### **5. SAFER COMMUNITIES**

- 5.1 There had been circulated copies of the Safer Communities Performance Report covering the period April 2014 to 31 March 2015. Inspector Scott highlighted the key points in the report and it was noted that, in respect of domestic abuse, there had been an increase in the number of reported incidents, including those to the dedicated Domestic Abuse

Advocacy Service (DAAS). The report also explained that the percentage of self-referrals to specialist support services had decreased compared to the same period the previous year. The report also identified an increase of 2% in the number of children on the Child Protection Register where domestic abuse had been identified as a risk factor. In relation to the homeless prevention service, there had been the first increase in the past two years. The report noted that there had been minor reduction in the number of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) incidents. Members were advised that youth-related incidents had decreased by 178 (10.1%). Early interventions made by Anti-Social Behaviour partners resulted in an increase of 3.4% (36 cases) which demonstrated a very positive and proactive approach. There had been 6 less incidents of reported vandalism compared to the same period last year. There was a decrease of 2% in the number of alcohol-related ASB incidents. A rise of 17% in incidents involving needles/drugs paraphernalia was reported. In terms of Home Injury Prevention, the report recorded that the number of hospital admissions for people aged 75+ caused by falls had decreased by 212 (34.1%) and there were 3 less emergency hospital admissions due to a home accident of children under 5 years. The figures for road injuries remained the same compared to the same period in the previous year and no children had been killed or seriously injured in a road crash. It was noted that the number of persons killed had decreased by 1 compared to the same period last year. However there had been a 33.3% increase in the number of persons seriously injured during the same period. It was noted that the Skills for Life programme had been expanded through a pilot project to include a motorcycle training programme through the Institute of Advanced Motoring , this was launched on 4 April 2015 at Galashiels Fire Station, with 19 Scottish Borders bikers signing up to the course which was taking place during the summer.

- 5.2 Inspector Scott paid tribute to Kerr Scott who had been a real driving force in the Safer Communities Team. It was noted that six locality officers worked hand in hand in community development with pastoral support staff in education, this was embedded with a localities approach with care and social work which resulted in meetings taking place around the child in question to discuss best options for keeping the child at school, giving the right level of intervention and support. This was now routine business for the partnership which was working well.

#### **MEMBER**

Councillor Nicol left the meeting.

- 5.3 In discussing figures provided for the number of hospital admissions for the over 75s, Inspector Scott advised that future reports could show a breakdown of those hospital admissions resulting from incidents within the person's home or outside the home. In referring to "highs" and reports that children as young as 12 had been admitted to hospital, Inspector Scott advised educational materials were delivered to school pupils by pastoral care staff in Schools supported by the alcohol development partnership.

#### **DECISION**

(a) **NOTED the report.**

(b) **AGREED:**

- (i) **to record the Board's thanks to Kerr Scott for all his good work and also to the domestic abuse team; and**
- (ii) **that future reports would show a breakdown of those hospital admissions for the over 75s and whether they resulted from incidents within the person's home or outside the home.**

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 11.20 a.m. and reconvened at 11.30 a.m.

6. **PRESENTATION - VERY LOCAL POLICE PLANS AND LOCAL POLICING IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS.**

Chief Inspector McLean presented information on the 2015 Multi Ward Police Planning Process which included consultation with Community Councils, Area Forums and included wider engagement with communities. The results of the survey had been analysed to identify the top priorities in each multi member ward. Ward plans could be found on the Police Scotland Website under Your Community.

**DECISION**

**NOTED the presentation.**

7. **UPDATES ON CONSOLIDATION AND SUSTAINABILITY**

7.1 **Police Scotland**

Chief Supt. Imery provided a verbal update. She advised of the success in getting interim legislation for legal powers to control ingredients relating to legal highs. In the next year the Government would be looking to legislate on this matter. Officers had attended a meeting in London regarding the misuse of drugs and there was positive development nationally. She advised that PC Jamie Hood, Wildlife Crime Officer had provided figures which showed that from end of October 2014 to 1 May 2015, 24 incidents fell into category of wild life crime, the biggest proportion of which related to deer, hare coursing and poaching. There was a national focus on wild life crime and rural crime and this Division was the first in Scotland to establish a forum chaired by a Detective Superintendent. The Board would be provided with updates as time progressed. The Police were continuing to experience budgetary constraints and VAT issue had already been referred to. There was a significant saving to be made this financial year. Police estate was being looked at across Scotland to ascertain what buildings the previous forces had and what properties could be identified for release or for sharing with partner agencies. This exercise would not be conducted solely by Police Scotland but in partnership with Councils and key partners to make better use of estate, although the first property was to make services more accessible to the public.

7.2 Chief Supt. Imery referred to some negative press publicity given to Police Scotland and advised she was not picking up public concerns about the service the local community was receiving. She advised whatever was written in the papers, local Police were keen to listen and do their best to address any concerns. Priorities for the year going forward had been agreed and included areas such as early intervention to avert escalation of criminal behaviour. An operation was on going with colleagues in Edinburgh seeking to deal with the phenomenon of people stealing car keys from hall tables after having identified houses with high performance vehicles, a day of action had taken place recently and some of the crimes relating to stolen vehicles, including two from this area, had been solved.

7.3 A request was made for the Police Wildlife Officer to attend meetings of two Community Councils in the Hawick area to discuss the problems of hare coursing but it was noted that updates of wildlife crime would be received at future meetings of the Board.

**DECISION**

**NOTED the report.**

7.4 **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service**

Group Manager Girrity advised on forthcoming board engagement events and advised that invitations would be issued for the Board meeting on 28 May 2015. Unwanted fire alarm signals (UFAS) were a significant issue across Scotland and a project team was being initiated to investigate the situation. The Service adopted an incremental approach to UFAS incidents with an emphasis placed on working with repeat offenders in order to educate and reduce reoccurrence. A specialist appliance review implementation group had been established. He had attended one meeting, the next was scheduled to be held on 26 May 2015 to discuss changes coming into line in the next one to three years and he

would keep the Board updated on progress. As Incident Commander he had attended a fire at the Gordon Arms Hotel, Yarrow. Four appliances had been present and there had been extensive damage to the roof and upper floor because of location issues for water and high winds. No one had been injured. Investigations into the cause of the fire would take place but there was nothing so far to indicate that this had been a malicious incident. Group Manager Girrity then gave information into current staffing levels in the Borders. Invitations would be issued to a multi station exercise to be held at Floors Castle on 27 September 2015.

**DECISION  
NOTED.**

**8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS.**

Future meetings of the Board were scheduled to take place at 9.30am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells on:

Friday 28 August 2015;  
Friday 13 November 2015;  
Friday 12 February 2016; and  
Friday 13 May 2016.

**DECISION  
NOTED.**

**9. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT.**

9.1 Under Section 50B(4)(b) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the Chairman was of the opinion that the items dealt with in the following paragraphs should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency, in view of the need to keep Members informed.

**9.2 BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE**

In regard to the situation regarding British Transport Police, Members were advised that discussions were ongoing in relation Police Scotland taking over policing of the rail network from British Transport Police and the Chairman would be kept updated.

**DECISION  
NOTED.**

**9.3 BOARD PROGRAMME OF VISITS ETC.**

Mr D. Scott suggested that Board Members visit Hawick Fire Station. He advised that a presentation on the Coastguard Service and how it impacted on the Berwickshire Coast would be given at the next Board meeting.

**DECISION  
NOTED.**

***The meeting concluded at 12.20 pm***