

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

MINUTES of Meeting of the POLICE, FIRE & RESCUE AND SAFER COMMUNITIES BOARD held in Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells on Friday, 13th November, 2015 at 9.30 am

- Present:- Councillors D. Moffat (Chairman), S. Aitchison (for para 6.1), B Herd, A. Nicol, G. Turnbull, Mr G. Higgs, Voluntary Sector, Mr H. Waltl.
- Apologies:- Councillor R. Stewart, Mr J. Raine, NHS Borders.
- In Attendance:- Chief Superintendent G. Imery, Police Scotland, Chief Inspector A. McLean, Police Scotland, Inspector T. Hodges, Safer Communities Team Manager, Mr P. Rooney, Scottish Police Authority, A. Perry, LSO, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Group Manager A. Girrity, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Mrs J. Mulloy, Scottish Borders Housing Association, Mr D. Scott, Senior Policy Adviser SBC, Ms S. Smith, Communities & Partnership Manager, SBC, K. Mason, Democratic Services Officer, SBC

1. WELCOME

The Chairman extended a welcome to those present.

2. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman varied the order of business as shown on the agenda and the Minute reflects the order in which the items were considered at the meeting.

3. MINUTE.

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the meeting held on 28 August 2015.

DECISION

APPROVED the Minute.

4. MATTERS ARISING

4.1 With reference to paragraph 3.2, Councillor Turnbull advised that he had received a letter dated 2 July 2005 from the Rt Hon David Mundell MP advising that Section 33 of the Value Added Tax Act 1994 contained a refund mechanism to ensure that VAT was not a cost borne by local taxation. To qualify for this, a body must have the power to draw funding directly from local taxation. The previous local police forces and fire and rescue services qualified for this reduction, because they were partly funded through the council tax precept. In 2012 following the merge into single national bodies, Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service were funded directly by the Scottish Government rather than through any local taxes, and so did not fit under that criteria. In 2011 the Scottish Government was warned of this consequence of changing from regional police and fire services to a single authority. The Scottish Government's own business case predicated that the benefits of merger outweighed the loss of any VAT refunds, and so the Scottish Government continued restructuring with that in mind. The restructuring was the decision of the Scottish Government, made with the full knowledge of the VAT consequences of their decisions.

**DECISION
NOTED.**

- 4.2 With reference to paragraph 4.1 (b) (i) it was confirmed that Councillor Stewart would liaise with David Mallin regarding road signs in car parks.

**DECISION
NOTED.**

- 4.3 With reference to paragraph 4.1 (b) (ii) it was confirmed that the target figure for Priority 5 would be dealt with in the Police report.

**DECISION
NOTED.**

- 4.4 With reference to paragraph 4.3 it was noted that at the meeting of Council of 7 October 2015 the recommendation in that a report be prepared for the Council on the Future of the Pathways Project and that Officers would promote the young drivers initiative and a communications plan would be put together to ensure all avenues of communication were covered, had been approved.

**DECISION
NOTED.**

- 4.5 With reference to paragraph 6.2 (b) (i) a report on decriminalisation of parking enforcement in the Scottish Borders would be dealt with at this meeting.

**DECISION
NOTED.**

- 4.6 With reference to paragraph 6.2(b)(ii) information on parking tickets would be dealt with in the Police report.

**DECISION
NOTED.**

- 4.7 With reference to paragraph 6.4(b)(i) information relating to cardiac arrests would be dealt with in the Fire and Rescue Service report.

**DECISION
NOTED.**

5. DECRIMINALISED PARKING.

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Commercial Services presenting an update on the progress of the Council in relation to Decriminalised Parking Enforcement. The report explained that following the withdrawal of the traffic warden service there had been a much reduced monitoring and enforcement service of vehicular waiting and loading restrictions within the area's towns and villages. This in turn had led to reduced compliance, poorer traffic management and increased public complaints. An officer/member Working Group was set up in the summer of 2014 to explore the options available to the Council. The Working Group had identified that the best way forward for the Council in terms of traffic management in Scottish Borders towns was to apply to Scottish Ministers to introduce Decriminalised Parking Enforcement. Mr Brian Young, Network Manager emphasised however that Scottish Borders Council had yet to determine its position on a preferred way forward. Mr Young answered questions relating to legislation and on suggested other methods of controlling parking. Chief Inspector McLean gave assurance that Police Officers enforced legislation and parking tickets were issued in all towns in the Scottish Borders.

DECISION

NOTED the updated position in regard to the on-street parking control and thanked Mr Young for his attendance.

6. PROGRESS REPORTS. CONSIDER PROGRESS REPORT FROM:-

6.1 Police

Chief Superintendent G. Imery referred to the early retirement of the Chief Constable and advised the process was ongoing to identify his replacement and interviews would take place next week. The Chair of the SPA was keen that the newly appointed Chief Constable would be identified by the beginning of December. She went on to give information relating to the outcomes of the First National Staff Survey which had been published at the beginning of October. Engagement of staff in the survey amounted to over 50%. There were issues identified during the survey many of which were already being addressed. A portion of staff indicated they were considering leaving the service and the factors for this were not within the control of the organisation but were because of changes in the pension scheme. She referred to the publication of HMIC's Review of Call Handling at Bilston Glen and advised that Police Scotland would continue to work with HMIC on the recommendations contained within the report. In referring to a gap in the Police Scotland budget she advised that locally contributions would be made towards the shortfall. She advised that from 1 April 2015 until the present 230 parking tickets had been issued with 152 warnings. In certain circumstances leaflets were put on car windscreens advising parking was not permissible.

Chief Inspector A. McLean presented the Police Progress report covering the period April 2015 to September 2015 which had been circulated. The report detailed the figures for the six Priority areas to date and compared them to the figures for the same period in 2014/15. In relation to Priority 1 – Protecting People figures showed a small increase in performance on the same time last year, and 2.5% better than target. Priority 2 – showed a 3.4% increase in common assaults in the year to date compared to the same time period in 2014/15. This equated to 3 more victims than at the same point last year. In respect of reducing the number of antisocial behaviour incidents there had been a 9% reduction (258 incidents in the year to date compared to the same time period last year). With regards to increasing the reporting of hate crime – there had been a significant increase in the number of recorded victims of hate crime in the year to date and it was noted that this was most likely due to the hard work by police and partners to raise awareness of hate related issues and the awareness campaign entitled 'No Place for Prejudice', this was seen as a positive increase. Priority 3 Tackling substance misuse – Police Scotland were undergoing a test phase on a new stop and search data base which went online on 1 June 2015, validation and testing of the data was ongoing and data collected would be detailed in future reports. There had been a 26.5% decrease in the number of visits to licensed premises, which equated to 293 fewer visits. Priority 4 – Making our roads safer – there had been a 15.6% reduction (5 fewer casualties) in the year to date; the number of people killed in the year to date was 5, which was 2 more fatalities than at the same point last year. The number of serious injuries was reduced by 7. Two children were seriously injured on the roads in the second quarter. Priority 5 – Tackling serious and organised crime – cash seizures had exceeded the value seized at the same point last year. No further asserts had been referred for restraint in quarter 2. It was positive to note that there was a 33.3% increase in the detection for drug supply, with 36 detected offences for drug supply for the year to date. Priority 6 – Tackling Acquisitive Crime – there had been a decrease in the number of housebreaking to dwellings leading to 13 fewer victims of this type of crime in the year to date when compared with the same time period in

2014/15. There had been a 23.4% reduction in theft of motor vehicles in the year to date which equated to 8 fewer victims of this type of crime.

In relating to the call centre at Bilston Glen, Councillor Moffat felt the Board should have been more proactive in sharing its concerns with the SPA. In respect of changes in anti-social behaviour it was noted that early intervention working in partnerships benefitted members of the community. Chief Inspector McLean would report at a future meeting on (a) whether any hate crime was directed towards people who used wheelchairs and, (b) to advise whether there was a suitable facility in the Tweeddale area for young driver courses.

DECISION

- (a) **NOTED the report.**
- (b) **AGREED that Chief Inspector McLean would report at a future meeting (a) on whether any hate crime was directed towards people who used wheelchairs and, (b) on whether there was a suitable facility in the Tweeddale area for young driver courses**

MEMBER

Councillor Aitchison joined the meeting at 10.25 a.m. during discussion of the above item and left at 11.10 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned 11.10 a.m. and reconvened at 11.20 a.m.

6.2 Fire and Rescue Service

LSO, A. Perry thanked Board members for their attendance at Hawick Fire Station. He gave background information relating to the reduction in control rooms from 8 to 3 and advised that once all the changes had been made an invitation would be made to members of the Board to visit the new state of the art facility in Edinburgh. Fire safety advice had been given recently to farmers at two local farms. He confirmed that firefighters in selected areas had received enhanced training in life-support through a joint partnership with the Scottish Ambulance Service. The trial was running at seven stations, three of which were located in the Scottish Borders. Consultation had taken place with the Ambulance Service in setting up the pilot and where the pilot schemes would be located. The Fire and Rescue Service had held an event 15 October 2015 which had been supported by the British Heart Foundation, when CPR was taught by using mannequins and a self-teaching DVD programme.

There had been circulated copies of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Performance Report covering the period 1 April to 30 September 2015. In summarising the report, Group Manager A. Girrity advised that with regard to Priority 1: Reduction of Dwelling Fires, the SFRS had attended 55 dwelling fires in comparison to 41 for the same YTD reporting period last year, this represented a 35% increase although the previous 2015 quarterly comparison showed a 28% decrease. Five of the fires had been started deliberately with one this quarter, this occurred in a tenement on Hawick High Street. The kitchen continued to be the most common room of origin for fires; this was followed by the living room. Priority 2: Reduction in Fire Fatalities and Casualties, the report noted that there had been nine fire related casualties in this reporting period, and this was an increase of two compared to the same period last year. In contrast, 2015 quarterly comparison showed a decrease with seven casualties in the first quarter and three this quarter. The year to date period had seen one fire fatality. There had been three non-fatal fire casualties this quarter all suffering from slight smoke inhalation. There were no fire fatalities this quarter. Priority 3: Reduction of Deliberate Fire Setting indicated an increase of 17 in comparison to the same reporting period last

year. 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 ward areas of Galashiels and District and Tweeddale showed significant increases for this period. The spate of fire raising carried out in Galashiels earlier this year had been detailed in the last report. Wood, scrubland, refuse and straw bales accounted for the majority of these incidents. The increase was consistent with warmer drier months in the summer and could often be contributed to members of the public being careless rather than malicious.

Priority 4: Reduction in Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) indicated that the SFRS attended 45 Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs), this was a decrease of one compared to the same period last year. There had been 28 RTC related casualties in this YTD period. There had been four fatalities, two occurring this quarter at the same incident on the A7 north of Stow. The Service used Hydraulic Rescue Equipment on 25 occasions during this year to date period to extricate casualties. Priority 5 related to the Reduction of Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals and it was noted that there had been 407 Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals during this quarter, representing a decrease of 36 incidents compared to the same period last year.

DECISION
NOTED the report.

6.3 Safer Communities

There had been circulated copies of the Safer Communities Performance Report covering the period 1 April 2015 to 30 September 2015. Inspector T. Hodges advised he was delighted to have recently taken up post as the Manager of the Safer Communities Team following Chief Inspector Paula Clark's recent retiral. The Safer Communities Team were in the process of finalising a Strategic Assessment to direct its action plan for the coming years and an internal Review of that service would soon commence. He hoped this would assist in moving forward in a positive manner and improving on the preventative services the team delivered and facilitated in partnership across the Scottish Borders. He would be looking to improve the reporting mechanism to the Board in an effort to provide a more meaningful context to the performance within Safer Communities. He then went on to highlight some of the key areas in his report and advised in respect of Gender Based Violence the Team's Pathway Project had been subject of a comprehensive external evaluation which had in general terms been extremely positive. This would be incorporated into current funding bids to hopefully secure the Domestic Abuse Advocacy Services future years and an initial report on this would be considered by the Council's Corporate Management Team the following week. The figure in red (37%) under Service User satisfaction was in reality not a negative one but represented very constructive feedback from 4 service users who had been supported by the service. This feedback was appreciated and allowed continuous improvements in service delivery. The training currently being delivered to professionals in respect of Gender Based Violence had a very positive effect. He was aware that there were limitations in respect of how much training was being delivered. The Team was working closely across agencies through the Violence Against Women Partnership to ensure this issue was continued to be incorporated into other training media such as Child and Adult Protection. DAAS advocacy workers had started providing briefings to front line Police Officers across the Borders to improve understanding of the services they could offer victims of Domestic Abuse. In relation to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) through the ASB Partnership Group he had initiated a review of current policies and procedures to ensure they were fit for the future. Whilst

numbers of reported incidents were slightly higher than predicted, he was satisfied that these were being addressed at the appropriate level, whether via mediation or by more formal ASB processes. Early intervention and partnership working in this area remained the key. In relation to alcohol and drugs, the increase shown in vandalism (a crime often linked to the night-time economy) was currently being robustly addressed by the Local Area Commander via the daily tasking and co-ordinating process. It should however be noted that the current rates were below the three-year average for this type of crime. The Team was in the early stages of working with local churches with a view to introducing Street Pastors to the Borders. These schemes were very successful across the country often resulting in a decrease of alcohol related incidents such as vandalism in town centres at weekends. Strong partnership working was bearing fruit in respect of incidents being reported in licensed premises, and the success of festivals, common ridings and rugby sevens were excellent examples of how old issues relating to alcohol abuse at these events was being addressed. Schools officers and health partners were actively involved with young people in preventative work in respect of alcohol and substance misuse. He advised that the Community Planning Partnership had commissioned a multi-agency Living Safely in the Home Working Group which would be chaired by Group Manager A. Girrity from the Fire and Rescue Service to ensure the best use was made of all partners to improve the safety of vulnerable persons in their home. Finally, in relation to road safety, the Scottish Borders Road Safety Working Group continued along with the Police Scotland Road Safety Board to coordinate resources to educate and enforce legislation in an effort to address poor driver behaviour. A request was made that all Members of the Council should be invited to attend exercises such as the one recently held at Floors Castle.

DECISION

- (a) NOTED.**
- (b) AGREED that all Members of Scottish Borders Council should be invited to attend future events such as the one recently held at Floors Castle.**

7. UPDATE FROM THE SCOTTISH POLICY AUTHORITY

Mr Rooney advised that he was pleased to attend these joint meetings and he considered that the team was an excellent one. One of his key Scottish Police Authority (SPA) responsibilities was to liaise with members of local scrutiny committees – in his case with Scottish Borders, and North and South Lanarkshire which allowed a two way dialogue. The new Chair of the SPA, Andrew Flanagan started at the beginning of September and one of his key priorities was to undertake a review of the Governance of Policing in Scotland. This review was announced on 3 September by the Cabinet Secretary, and a report on this was expected in March 2016. The review would ensure that accountability arrangements for policing could be built on the lessons learned during the operation of the single force to date and those robust arrangements were in place for the future. Recommendations should take account of the outcome of the local scrutiny summit which had taken place on 23 September. All 32 local authorities were being actively invited to contribute and he explained how this would happen. Mr Flanagan had committed the SPA to taking forward a joint meeting with COSLA and local senior council officers, with support from Police Scotland. This meeting was taking place on 16 November and would consider findings from the summit; both Douglas Scott and Shona Smith would attend the meeting. A follow up meeting would be offered, and an invitation issued to local scrutiny committee conveners to participate. The Chair would report the findings of the review in March 2016. The SPA had other pieces of engagement underway or in the pipeline including consulting on the SPA Gaelic Language Plan; and there would be more local engagement from the SPA in coming months on the new Strategic Plan for Policing. He concluded by advising that the SPA were facing significant budgetary challenges and

work around the governance review was designed to ensure the SPA could build on the lessons learned during the operation of the single force to date, and ensure that the right and most robust arrangements were in place to meet these challenges.

**DECISION
NOTED.**

MEMBER

Councillor Nicol left the meeting during consideration of the above item.

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 12 February 2016; and
Friday 13 May 2016.

**DECISION
NOTED.**

The meeting concluded at 12.35 pm