

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

MINUTES of Meeting of the POLICE, FIRE &
RESCUE AND SAFER COMMUNITIES
BOARD held via Microsoft Teams on Friday,
26 November 2021 at 9.30 am

Present:- Councillors G. Turnbull (Chairman), D. Moffat, N. Richards, E. Robson,
H. Scott, E Small, James Ayling - NHS Borders and Ms M Simpson -
Voluntary Sector.

In Attendance:- Chief Superintendent John McKenzie, Superintendent Stephen Hazlett, Local
Senior Officer Stephen Gourlay, Inspector Michael Bennett, Group
Commander Tony Collins, Local Senior Officer Hilary Sangster, Local Senior
Officer Stephen Gourlay, Michelle Meldrum, Chief Executive BHA, Safer
Communities and Community Justice Manager, Communities and Partnership
Manager, Democratic Services Officer (W. Mohieddeen).

1. MINUTES

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the Meeting held on 27 August 2021. With reference to the list of attendees, Mr Ayling advised that Malcolm Dickson was not present at the Meeting and that Mr Ayling should be listed as a Member of the Board.

DECISION

APPROVED the Minute, subject to the above amendment.

2. PROGRESS REPORTS/UPDATES ON SERVICE MATTERS - POLICE SCOTLAND

- 2.1 Chief Superintendent McKenzie announced that he was retiring after the Meeting. Superintendent Stephen Hazlett would be joining the division from COP26 planning. The new Divisional Commander Catriona Paton was installed in November.
- 2.2 Chief Superintendent McKenzie presented the Quarter 2 Police Scotland Report. Operations for COP26 took place over a three-week period towards the end of October 2021 and two weeks into November 2021. This went well from, a policing perspective which Borders officers contributed to. COP26 entailed two years of preparation for Police Scotland which ensured that normal service provision could continue. Less than 100 people were arrested. Lessons learnt included the value of mobile technicians to service vehicles.
- 2.3 A major incident was declared for the flood event in Hawick in October 2021. The policing perspective was that a positive police response took place with 70 officers from four divisions attending to assist evacuation. Police Scotland were undertaking a review to identify points of learning.
- 2.4 Chief Superintendent McKenzie advised that a year-to-year comparison was not useful due to the 2020 pandemic period. Domestic abuse had been a priority for Borders operations and it had been noticed that there had been an increase in reporting of domestic abuse alongside an increase in detections. There was nearly a 25% decrease in antisocial behaviour however, there were still areas of antisocial behaviour that required further attention. Drugs supply, production and cultivation crime was down 15% however,

this did not reflect the amount of drugs that had been recovered where one incident resulted in 1.2kg of cocaine being recovered. Stephen Irvine, an officer in the Borders, had won national wildlife crime enforcement officer of the year in relation to rural crime activity and wildlife enforcement work. Missing persons remained a challenge for policing where there had been a significant decrease in missing persons reports which had been attributed to work undertaken with NHS partners of Police Scotland. The Herbert Protocol for adults living with dementia, the missing persons with autism protocol and missing looked after children were in effect. Domestic abuse continued to increase with a 16.42% increase compared to the 5-year average of reported incidents. The increase was attributed to a greater confidence in reporting incidents as domestic abuse had been considered an underreported crime. Chief Superintendent McKenzie advised that there would be proactive policing on domestic abuse perpetrators throughout the year. Hate crime figures were concerning with an increase in of 36 incidences in quarter two compared to the five-year average. Chief Superintendent McKenzie stated that 15% of reported hate crimes referred to Police officers as victims. Sexual crime had increased which might be attributed to confidence in reporting. The Borders policing team had been undertaking operations to tackle organised crime with national support. There was a 67% increase in violent crime which was linked to a number of areas including a 342% increase, or 17.8 crimes of threats and extortion known as “sextortion” which includes the threat of sharing sexual information, images or clips to extort money from people. Antisocial Behaviour had reduced with concern remaining in Hawick, Peebles and Kelso where youth disorder had been a priority. With regard to acquisitive crime, rural thefts were identified as a challenge and had been linked to organised crime. Superintendent Hazlett advised that success in this activity would be reported in the next quarterly report.

- 2.5 In response to questions from Members, Mr Ayling and Chief Superintendent McKenzie advised that Police Scotland and NHS worked positively in cases involving vulnerable missing people. Rural theft cases were treated as intelligence-led as the size of the area for Police Scotland to patrol in the Borders was challenging. Chief Superintendent McKenzie emphasised that preventative measures should be undertaken to reduce rural crime.
- 2.6 The Chairman on behalf of the Board thanked Chief Superintendent McKenzie recorded their appreciation of his service to the Borders and wished him well in his retirement.

DECISION

AGREED to note the Report.

3. PROGRESS REPORTS/UPDATES ON SERVICE MATTERS - SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

- 3.1 There had been circulated copies of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service performance report 1 April to 30 September 2021. Stephen Gourlay advised members of changes to the SFS Midlothian East Lothian and Scottish Borders management team. Area Commander Hilary Sangster was introduced as the new Local Senior Officer for Mid and East Lothian and Borders. Group Commander Tony Collins was moving to a new training role and would be replaced by Group Commander Keith Langley who was formerly station commander of Galashiels Community Fire Station.
- 3.2 Local Senior Officer Gourlay presented the report highlighting that domestic smoke detection legislation would be live from February 2022. Senior Officer Gourlay advised that a briefing paper would be circulated to Members following the meeting.
- 3.3 Key Performance Indicators outlined in the Local Performance Report had mix levels of results and it was advised that a year-on-year comparison on indicators was difficult due to the impact of the pandemic. Tony Collins advised that as restriction ease, there would be an increase in operational activity. There had been an increase in dwelling fires while fire casualties were down. Deliberate fires had decreased from 79 to 57 and special service – road traffic collisions had increased from 12 to 29. False alarms were reported

to have been equal to 2021-22. Special service casualties had had increased by 24 to 38.

- 3.4 In response to a question from Councillor Moffat with regards to an increase in dwelling fires from one to eight in Mid Berwickshire, Local Senior Officer Gourlay advised that there were sometime peaks and troughs in incidents over a reporting year. It was advised that community safety engagement teams release messaging on fire safety and alcohol and that low-level incidents including fumes affecting sheltered housing alarms were treated as a fire incident and that it was important to reflect on reduction in casualty rates.

DECISION

AGREED to note the Report.

4. SAFER COMMUNITIES UPDATE AND KEY ACTIVITIES

- 4.1 There had been circulated copies of the Report by the Safer Communities and Community Justice Manager. The Mediation Officer had moved to a new post which resulted in Safer Communities without a mediation service. Plans were in place to cross-skill all Antisocial Behaviour Unit officers to give additional flexibility in service provision. The Mediation officer provided the gypsy/traveller liaison which was regarded a crucial function. All Antisocial Behaviour Officers will undertake accredited mediation training. The Community Safety Officer would also take responsibility for gypsy/traveller liaison from the Antisocial Behaviour Officer/Mediation function.
- 4.2 In response to a question from Councillor Robson, Mr Jones outlined the refugee arrivals process, this differed between Syrian and Afghan schemes. Syrian families are flown to Edinburgh from abroad while Afghan families have already been in the UK and transferred from bridging accommodation.
- 4.3 There had been recorded a decrease in antisocial behaviour incidents of 24.9% when compared to 2020-21 and there had been a 14.9% increase of people monitored for antisocial behaviour. The rate of antisocial behaviour was reaching levels seen before the Covid-19 pandemic. The number of domestic abuse referrals was 17% higher than at the same point in the year as 2020-21. Repeat deferrals to the Domestic Abuse Advocacy Service was 28.3% below the targeted threshold of 30%. 92.6% of referrals were contacted in agreed timescales.

DECISION

AGREED to note the update.

5. WORKSHOP - AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Members discussed the recommendation by Audit and Scrutiny Committee that a workshop be held for members of the Police, Fire & Rescue, and Safer Communities Board to explain the process of tasking for the Police Community Action Teams (CAT). Mr Jones suggested that a session be organised for the Police, Fire and Rescue and Safer Communities Board and/or to Elected Members. It was agreed that a briefing to Elected Members' take place in the first instance.

DECISION

AGREED that the Safer Communities and Community Justice Manager would work with the Clerk of the Council and the Partnership Intelligence Analyst to deliver a session on the functions of the CAT at a Members' Briefing.

The meeting concluded at 11.55am