

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL – 25 SEPTEMBER 2020

STARRED ITEM FROM COMMITTEE MINUTES

POLICE, FIRE & RESCUE AND SAFER COMMUNITIES BOARD – 28 AUGUST 2020

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

4.1 Chief Superintendent McKenzie began his report by referring to the impact of Covid-19 and the changes to the police response service as a result. An approach to non-attendance involving partners had been implemented at the end of March as part of Police Scotland's Contact Assessment Model. This had reduced calls to the front line by 20-25%. The mental health pathway had also been implemented over the past week, redirecting calls to ensure the public received the assistance they required. Chief Superintendent McKenzie further advised that this year's performance figures would not be comparable to previous years, for example the 62% rise in anti-social behaviour related to Covid-19 activity (people not wearing masks, group gatherings). In addition, domestic abuse in March had reduced within the Scottish Borders, which had also been reflected nationally. However, over the last few weeks incidents had risen and were comparable to the number of incidents reported during festive periods. Domestic abuse remained a police priority and perpetrators continued to be pursued, with appropriate support given to domestic abuse victims. Chief Superintendent McKenzie went on to advise that another challenge, during the period, had been inclement weather conditions resulting in damage to the road transport network, particularly the A68. Additional patrols and deployment of mobile camera units supported local communities affected by the diversion. Chief Superintendent McKenzie then referred to the Chief Constable's Pledge which related to criminality perpetrated to emergency service workers. Within Scottish Borders there had been 19 assaults on emergency workers, three of which were against NHS staff. The Pledge had been supported by the Scottish Government and he asked that the Board consider supporting the Pledge. With regard to 101 calls, he acknowledged that there had been on occasions some challenges regarding achieving the 'call answer' timescale, however significant work has been undertaken regarding increasing routes of accessibility such as online reporting. The Covid-19 factor has contributed through public seeking advice and guidance and utilising the 101 route in an effort to secure such guidance. Chief Superintendent McKenzie concluded his report by advising that the consultation on Coldstream Police Station had been delayed and would be undertaken once the Coldstream Community Council had been elected. In response to a questions, Chief Superintendent McKenzie advised that the Pledge had been widely supported with the issue of legislation part of ongoing discussions. With regard to speeding in Greenlaw, he would discuss the matter raised by Councillor Moffat out-with the meeting.

4.2 Chief Inspector Stuart Reid then explained that in Quarter 2019/20, there had been a reduction in crimes of violence, serious assaults, house break-ins, traffic casualties and anti-social behaviour incidents. There had been circulated copies of the Quarter 1 (2020/2021) performance report. The report showed there had been a reduction of 19% in crimes and offences, with reductions in common assault, crimes of dishonesty, road casualties and missing people. There had been rises in incidents of sexual crime, anti-social behaviour (majority Covid-19 incidents), crimes of violence, cruelty to children and serious assaults,

details of which were included within the report. Referring to the work of the Community Action Team (CAT), he advised that parents were now sent a letter highlighting their child's involvement in any anti-social behaviour incidents. The CAT had also carried out road checks, drug searches and issued parking tickets during the period.

4.3 Board members then raised a number of questions which were answered by officers. With regard to the substantial amount of cannabis detected in Hawick, the premises involved were private lets and the offence linked to serious organised crime on a national scale. With regard to anti-social behaviour by motorcycles at Moneynut Forest, near Duns, the issue would be raised with Sergeant Rourke to ensure more patrols visited the area. The speed of motorcyclists on the Kelso to Cornhill route would be reported to the local Roads Policing Team for a prevention plan to be implemented. With regard to vandalism, it was explained that it was caused primarily by youths, with alcohol being a factor. With regard to County lines crime, cuckooing had been prevalent in the Eyemouth area and a number of successful operations had taken place with a recent arrest made the previous week. With regard to the 25% rape detection rate this was as a result of a delay in forensic results because of the pandemic.

4.4 Chief Superintendent McKenzie then discussed The Lothian and Scottish Borders Local Police Plan 2020 – 23 and The Scottish Borders Local Police Plan 2020 – 23. Both Plans were 'live' Plans, copies of which had been circulated for comment. He explained that the Scottish Borders Local Police Plan reflected the local areas' priorities, outlining specific activities, objectives and partnership work to achieve these aims. The five priorities identified within the Scottish Borders were:- Protecting the most vulnerable people; Reducing violence and anti-social behaviour; Reducing acquisitive crime; Improving road safety; and, Tackling serious and organised crime. In response to questions, Chief Superintendent McKenzie explained that Special Police Constables were valuable within local communities. Unfortunately, numbers had depleted over the years with recruitment continuing to be challenging. In terms of organised criminality in relation to wildlife crime, there were a number of areas not included in the Plan, which would be tackled as part of ongoing operational policing.

DECISION

* (a) **AGREED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL approval of the Scottish Borders Local Police Plan 2020 - 2023.**

(b) **AGREED to request the Chair bring a Motion to Council in support of the Pledge.**