
COUNCIL FUNDED POLICE COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM

Report by Chief Social Work and Public Protection Officer

AUDIT & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 September 2020

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an overview and summary of activity undertaken by the Police Scotland Community Action Team (CAT) since its formation in 2018/19.**
- 1.2 In the financial year 2018/19 a sergeant and six constables came together to form the initial CAT. These officers funded by SBC were in addition to the Scottish Borders authorised policing establishment.
- 1.3 For the purposes of oversight and scrutiny a Member/Officer Oversight Group was established, this is cross party and representative of localities. Meetings are held monthly, CAT activity in the previous month is scrutinised and tasks for the upcoming month are agreed.
- 1.4 In 2019/20 a second CAT was established taking the complement to two sergeants and twelve constable. The increase in officers was incremental over several months. The initial commitment with Police Scotland for both teams is for three years up to the end of 2020/21.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that Audit and Scrutiny Committee notes the details of the management and operation of the Police Community Action Teams in the Scottish Borders.**

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Prior to April 2013 policing in the Scottish Borders was provided by Lothian and Borders Police (established in 1975), and formed one of 4 Territorial Divisions, G Division as it was known was co terminus with the Scottish Borders Council electoral boundaries.

- a) G Division Headquarters, based in Hawick, had the infrastructure and full spectrum of local policing resource at its disposal with a locally based Chief Superintendent accountable for the delivery of the policing function.
- b) The formation of Police Scotland in 2013 saw the creation of the Lothian's and Scottish Borders Division (J Division) consisting of West, East and Mid Lothian and the Scottish Borders. These areas had been 3 divisions under the legacy structure.
- c) J Division has its headquarters in Dalkeith with a Chief Superintendent responsible for the delivery of policing. Locally within the Scottish Borders is a Local Area Commander responsible for response policing, performance and management of personnel.
- d) As Police Scotland established and many of the national, regional and divisional structures formed there was a recognition that resources, in particular, associated with local policing had been lost from the community.
- e) Community policing had been a strength under the legacy structure and given the national resource allocation coupled with the need to develop specialist functions there was no likelihood that additional resources would be provided to the Scottish Borders.
- f) Scottish Borders Council recognised a gap in the profile and style of community policing the area had been accustomed to and made a commitment to fund additional community policing resources with appropriate political oversight.
- g) This resulted in the Council funded police Community Action Team being established. Other council areas have similar schemes to enhance community policing.

3.2 Strategic Oversight Group – Terms of Reference

- a) As part of the formation of the CAT a Strategic Oversight Group was established consisting of nine Elected Members a number of council officers and Police Scotland representatives. An Elected Member chairs the meeting.
- b) The objective of the Strategic Oversight Group is to ensure the Council maximises the value and operational effectiveness of the CAT across the Scottish Borders. An intelligence led approach has been taken to identify priority areas of activity that supports delivery of the Police Scotland Local Policing Plan and the Community Planning Partnership Community Plan.
- c) The Strategic Oversight Group has physically met on most months since the CAT's formation. During holiday periods and through the Covid-19 pandemic the meeting cycle has been maintained through an electronic exchange of information and using Microsoft Teams. This has been important in maintaining focus and clarity of purpose.

- d) Each meeting commences with the signing of a confidentiality agreement.
- e) The meeting then:
 - i) Reviews the previous months CAT activity
 - ii) Considers the forward looking analytical picture
 - iii) Attendees offer relevant context through local knowledge
 - iv) Elected Members raise emerging constituency issues
 - v) Attendees consider an appropriate response to identified current or emerging issues which are realistic and achievable
 - vi) Collectively consider alternative options and approaches to address specific identified problems
 - vii) The meeting concludes with an agreed CAT activity plan for the month.

3.3 Operational Delivery (Tasking)

- a) Each month proposals are put forward by the partnership analyst, elected members and Police Scotland that constitute identified or emerging problems/risks in the Scottish Borders. Specifically those that could benefit from focused Police attention to address the issues raised. Each proposal is considered and if deemed appropriate it becomes a specific tasking activity for the CAT.
- b) The table below shows how many proposed problems were discussed at the oversight meeting and of those problems how many became accepted tasks for the CAT. The proposed and accepted tasking is spread across all localities. Parking issues are included in the numbers below.

	2018/19		2019/20	
	Proposed	Accepted	Proposed	Accepted
Berwickshire	20	10	18	12
Cheviot	21	10	21	11
Eildon	28	20	28	21
Teviot	28	12	23	16
Tweeddale	18	9	18	15
Total	115	61	108	75
% Accepted Tasking	53.0%		69.4%	

- c) The figures show that in 2018/19 53% of proposals were accepted as tasking by the CAT. In 2019/20 this increased to 69.4%. The increase in accepted tasking in 2019/20 demonstrates the refinement of suitable proposals.
- d) Proposals not accepted are directed towards an alternative policing or council response.
- e) Only when a task is accepted by the CAT and becomes a 'problem solved' is it removed from the live tasking process. This occurs when there is sustained improvement.

- f) The incremental introduction of a second CAT has ensured equity and consistency in the policing profile across each month.

Management Information & Reporting

- 3.4
- a) To ensure the CAT activity is effectively monitored there are a number of mechanisms in place to ensure the work of the CAT is visible not only to elected members and council officers but also to the wider community within Scottish Borders.
 - b) All tasking proposed for the CAT, regardless of the source of the report, is logged and any action agreed to address the proposed problem is documented.
 - c) Not all tasks are appropriate for the CAT so where tasking is directed away from the CAT a record is maintained. The logging of all proposed tasking and clarity where the responsibility lies for addressing issues allows for effective tracking of the CAT and other disposal options when dealing with community issues.
 - d) The following summarises the reporting information available about the CAT:
 - i) Each month a summary of the CAT activity in relation to the agreed tasking is collated by the partnership analyst with input from the CAT sergeants. The summary shows the impact the CAT has had in statistical terms, that is any reduction in the number of incidents reported to Police Scotland as a result of the CAT actions. The CAT sergeants then provide narrative as to the work the team has undertaken to help reduce the volume of incidents reported to Police Scotland. The summary is shared with the CAT Oversight Group members. Summary statistics are provided to CAT Oversight Group members that can be shared with their communities.
 - ii) Every quarter an impact report is prepared for CMT and Council Executive, which is also made public and provides statistics and narrative of the work of the CAT within the quarter. The quarterly summary is similar to that provided on a monthly basis to CAT Oversight Group members.
 - iii) An example of the statistical information contained within the quarterly summary is the CAT deployment activity. The following table shows the number of hours the CAT have been deployed on foot and vehicle patrols in each year of operation.
 - iv) **Please note:** The hours quoted are not per officer based hours currently. For example a one hour foot patrol in a town could involve four CAT officers but it would be recorded as one patrol hour not four. For 2020/21 reporting the data collected will move to officer hours therefore it is expected patrol hours will increase.

	2018/19	2019/20
Foot Patrol Hours	335	585
Vehicle Patrol Hours	589	1046

- e) Other statistical information in relation to CAT tasking activity is shown in the Key Successes section below.

Key Successes

Drug Searches and Seizures

3.5

- a) The CAT have made significant inroads into addressing drug issues throughout the Scottish Borders and built on initial successes in 2018/19 with a number of significant drug seizures in 2019/20.
- b) The table below provides statistics on drug recoveries by the CAT in the Borders in the last two years. The value of drugs seized is approaching one million pounds and the effective targeting of persons and premises has accounted for an increased percentage of successful searches. This is important as success reflects the quality of intelligence. Drug recoveries make a significant contribution to the removal of community risk and harm.

	2018/19	2019/20
Positive Drug Searches (Property)	52	46
% Positive Drug Searches (Property)	80.0%	83.6%
Positive Drug Searches (Person)	75	69
% Positive Drug Searches (Person)	34.6%	37.3%
Drug Seizure Value	£12,500	£931,497

Examples of Activity - Youth Issue Resolution

- 3.6 a) Eyemouth - In November 2019 there were 21 reports of youths causing issues in Eyemouth, often in large groups. The CAT were deployed to the area and as a result reports dropped to 7 in December 2019, a 67% reduction in reports.
- b) Hawick - In April 2019 there were 60 reports of youths causing issues in Hawick as a whole with 12 reports at a specific location. The CAT was deployed to the area and reports dropped to 40 reports in May 2019, a 33% reduction. A further reduction was evidenced in June 2019 with 23 reports being made. The 62% reduction in reports in June 2019, when compared to April 2019, has been sustained.
- c) Peebles Town Centre – In November 2019 there were 29 reports of youths causing issues in Peebles, often in large groups with alcohol involved. The CAT were deployed to the area and as a result reports dropped to 7 in December 2019, a 76% reduction in reports. The reduction in reports has been sustained.

Parking Tickets

- 3.7 a) There were 884 parking tickets issued by the CAT in 2018/19 and 742 issued in 2019/20.
- b) There was a slight interruption in activity during June/July 2019 due to the availability of ticket books and latterly Covid-19 restrictions.
- c) It is also worthy of note that certain parking restrictions require the officer to observe the vehicle, wait for a period of time for the

offence to be complete before a ticket can be issued, for example a single yellow line or timed parking.

- d) On occasions photographic evidence of parking breaches has been submitted by members of the public or elected members for the CAT to enforce. However this is not possible as parking tickets cannot be issued retrospectively.
- e) The officers invest a considerable amount of time to parking enforcement in addition to the agreed priorities for the month.

Initiatives

- 3.8 a) In recognising the role that parents and guardians have for their young people a system of Youth Warning letters has been introduced during 2020/21, driven by the CAT. Any young person involved in antisocial behaviour and spoken to by police officers will have a letter sent to their home advising them of the type of behaviour the young person was involved in and the date on which they were spoken to. There is an escalation process if individuals are in contact with the police on more than one occasion for similar behaviour.

Seasonal Activity

- 3.9 a) The cultural and sporting events held across the Scottish Borders provide an opportunity for the CAT to engage with local communities but also to take a proactive stance in relation to issues such as underage drinking and antisocial behaviour. For example at the Stowed Out Festival the CAT were engaging with festival attendees in the wider environs of the event that were away from the designated event area. They also intervened post event when large numbers of people were still present in the area to safely disperse festival goers.
- b) Opportunistic crime can also be prevalent at some events and the CAT have supported the local community police officers in enhancing visibility at these events. For example in Innerleithen cycle theft prevention was a major focus of the team but dealing with constituency complaints associated with large gatherings such as parking issues and misuse of footpaths by cyclists was also addressed.

Dog Fouling

- 3.10 a) As you would expect the CAT along with all police officers will take action if they witness dog fouling occurring. Enforcement runs in parallel with encouraging responsible dog ownership by council officers.
- b) In circumstances in which a complaint of dog fouling is made known to the council and there is a witness prepared to give a statement to police identifying the dog and its owner then the CAT will investigate with a view to issuing a fixed penalty notice. The report to the CAT must be made within 7 days of the dog fouling offence occurring. There are often complaints made but either there is an unwillingness to provide a statement or the owner/dog is unknown. Information on numbers of tickets issued are available on the council web site.

Conclusion

- 3.11 a) The introduction of the CAT has provided an increase in resources to the community policing profile of the Scottish Borders beyond the Police Scotland authorised establishment.
- b) While examples of CAT activity are outlined in the report there is no doubt that these officers have also made a positive impact on violent related crime, licensing engagement, youth engagement and protecting the most vulnerable in our communities.
- c) The relationship between elected members, council officers and the CAT has developed over time as they collectively contribute to addressing issues of community concern. Importantly agreed activity is underpinned by a sound analytical profile necessary in giving credibility to the process.

4 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

- a) The Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Police Scotland for the two CAT is for three years to 31 March 2021.
- b) For the CAT to continue beyond 2020/21 a budget will be required and a refreshed SLA agreed.
- c) Not less than three month's notice is required to terminate the agreement.

4.2 Risk and Mitigations

- a) The effect of doing nothing will result in the demise of the CAT at the end of March 2021. There is no prospect of Police Scotland increasing its authorised establishment in the Scottish Borders.
- b) The opportunity to positively influence and direct policing activity through the CAT Oversight Group towards issues of community concern would be lost.
- c) Protected police time and the ability to readily commit to a proportionate response over a period of time would be compromised.
- d) Without the CAT additional short term requests for additional police resources would have to be made by the police Local Area Commander and may or may not be made available depending upon priorities elsewhere, divisionally, regionally or nationally.
- e) The police have operational independence, without the CAT this very local interface point with elected members and officers would be lost.
- (f) In legislation scrutiny of the Local Policing Plan will continue to be undertaken at the quarterly Police, Fire & Rescue and Safer Communities Board, and through the Community Planning Partnership structures. Additional representation on matters concerning policing can be made to the Police Authority and through COSLA.

4.3 **Equalities**

There are no equalities issues associated with this report.

4.4 **Acting Sustainably**

At this stage there are no immediate effects.

4.5 **Carbon Management**

At this stage they are not known.

4.6 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

No changes are required to the Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation.

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The report is to provide information to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on the development of the CAT and some of its successes.

Approved by

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Signature

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Background Papers:

Service Level Agreement

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Graham Jones can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Graham Jones, Graham.Jones@scotborders.gov.uk, Tel 0300100 1800 ex 8094.