

**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,  
28 August 2020 at 9.30 am.

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Present:- Councillors H Scott, (Chairman), D Moffat, N. Richards, E Robson, H Scott, E Small.

Mr M Dickson - NHS Borders and Ms M Simpson - Voluntary Sector

Apologies:- Councillor G Turnbull.

In Attendance:- Chief Superintendent J McKenzie, Chief Inspector S Reid, Police Scotland; Local Senior Officer S Gourlay, Group Commander M Jaffray, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service; Safer Communities and Community Justice Manager, Senior Policy Advisor, Communities and Partnership Manager and Democratic Services Officer, J Turnbull, SBC.

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1. **MINUTE**

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the meeting held on 7 February 2020.

**DECISION**

**APPROVED the Minute.**

2. **WELCOME**

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the Scottish Borders Council's open on-line meeting. The meeting was being held remotely in order to adhere to guidance on public meetings and social distancing currently in place, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

3. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTE**

It was noted that all matters arising from the Minute of 7 February were included in the reports to the Board.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

4. **PROGRESS REPORTS/UPDATE 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.**

## **ADJOURNED**

The meeting was adjourned between 10.50 am to 11.50 am.

### **5. PROGRESS REPORTS/UPDATE ON SERVICE MATTERS - SCOTTISH FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**

- 5.1 With reference to paragraph 6 of the Minute of 7 February 2020, Local Senior Officer Gourlay advised that the report on Peebles High School Fire had been concluded. The visit to Newbridge had been delayed because of Covid-19 restrictions. With regard to the pay offer, this had been rejected. The offer was now part of the National Joint Council negotiation and would be subject to a national ballot.
- 5.2 Local Senior Officer Gourlay went on to advise that Prevention and Protection activities with high risk individuals, had resumed with appropriate PPE. With regard to Rural Watch Commanders (RWC), appointments had been made for West Linton and Duns clusters, an appointment for the Hawick area was progressing. He explained that the RWC duties were dependent on the requirements of their local area e.g. swift water rescues skills, but they would also assist with recruitment, staffing and intelligence. In response to a question regarding Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS) he advised that during lockdown, there had been a downturn in the numbers received from relevant premises, with 9% of UFAS calls received during Q1 involving education premises. Work continued with partner organisations on managing UFAS. LSO Gourlay then went on to discuss the Local Community Fire and Rescue Plan Review 2020, copies of which had been circulated with the agenda, explaining that local priorities would form the basis of the next local plan and were: making people safe in the home; promoting community resilience in terms of non-fire emergencies; making roads safer; challenging anti-social behaviour; and reducing UFAS.
- 5.3 Group Commander (GC) Jaffray then presented the SFRS Local Plan Performance reports for Q4 (1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020) and Q1 (1 April to 30 June 2020), copies of which had been circulated with the agenda. With regard to Q4 he summarised: there had been an increase in fire casualties and a slight increase in road traffic collisions. There had been a decrease in special service casualties and UFAS (equipment failure still being the main cause).
- 5.4 GC Jaffray then summarised Q1 explaining there had been an increase in dwelling fires, fire casualties and deliberate fires. However, significant decreases in RTCs, special service casualties and UFAS. During Q1 the Fire Services had attended 327 incidents, 41 less than last year. There had been no major incidents, although a slight increase of one from previous year for dwelling fires, with cooking the main cause.
- 5.5 Prevention and Protection activities  
GC Jaffray then went on to discuss the SFRS Prevention and Protection activities, which had been impacted with many workplaces closed. The auditing program would shortly commence and would prioritise high risk premises such as care homes. Delivery of the Home Fire safety programme had also been impacted, but was still provided when high risk individuals were identified from partners and referrals were welcomed. To conclude, GC Gourlay explained that new working practices were being introduced to restart community engagement and maintain contact with partners. It was hoped over the next

few months the SFRS would be able to return to their normal engagement with the community.

#### **DECISION**

- (a) **NOTED the reports.**
- (b) **AGREED progression of the draft Local Plan.**

#### **MEMBER**

Mrs Simpson left the meeting during consideration of the above report.

#### **6. SAFER COMMUNITIES**

- 6.1 There had been circulated copies of the Safer Communities Performance reports for Q4 (1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020) and Q1 (1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020). The Safer Communities and Community Justice Manager, Mr Jones, advised that the office relocation to Langlee had not taken place because of Cobid-19 restrictions. With regard to the domestic abuse service, previously funded by the Big Lottery, Scottish Government and partner contributions, future reoccurring funding had been provided by SBC and restructuring of the advocates had taken place. Working practices had also been adjusted to allow services to continue during the pandemic.
- 6.2 Referring to the Q4 report, Mr Jones summarised the main points, explaining that domestic abuse incidents had risen but referrals to all domestic abuse services was lower than 2018/19. This was, in part, due to the Court Advocacy Service no longer being operational. This function was rolled up in the new arrangements. The number of domestic abuse repeat victims was being monitored given the repeat victimisation but also quality of response. Referrals were contacted within 24 hours if it came from the police or 48 hours from other sources. With regard to Cedar, the regular staff member had returned and group work would recommence in September. Anti-social behaviour incidents had decreased by 4.9%, likely as a result of mediation, CAT and the Safety Advisory Group.
- 6.3 Mr Jones then went on to discuss the Q1 report highlighting that there had been a decrease in group 1-5 crimes. Anti-social behaviour incidents had increased partly due to the number of calls relating to breaches of guidelines during lockdown. With regard to wildlife crime, discussions had taken place with East Lothian and Midlothian Council around hare coursing, the council community safety officer attended this meeting due to the cross border nature of these types of crime. With regard to the CAT he explained that locations with habitual speeding had been identified for a concentrated, consistent presence. In response to questions, Mr Jones explained that a report on CAT activity would be presented to the September/October Audit and Scrutiny Committee. The Board suggested that the report also detailed the value of the second CAT e.g. additional areas covered. Publicising the work of the CAT was also suggested. With regard to court advocates, Mr Jones explained these were bespoke posts within the domestic abuse service. CMT had agreed a budget and staff previously on temporary contracts were now employed on a permanent basis.

#### **DECISION**

**NOTED the report.**

#### **MEMBER**

Councillor Moffat left the meeting during consideration of the above report. .

7. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** The next meeting was scheduled to be held on Friday, 6 November 2020 at 9.30 am.

***The meeting concluded at 12.50 pm.***