

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

MINUTES of Meeting of the POLICE, FIRE &
RESCUE AND SAFER COMMUNITIES
BOARD held in Via Microsoft Teams on
Friday, 5th February, 2021 at 9.30 am

Present:- Councillors G. Turnbull (Chairman), D. Moffat, N. Richards, E. Robson,
H. Scott, E Small, Mr M Dickson - NHS Borders and Ms M Simpson -
Voluntary Sector, Mr H Coye –SBHA (para 3 - 5)

In Attendance:- Chief Superintendent J McKenzie, Chief Inspector V Fisher, Local Senior
Officer S Gourlay, Group Commander T Collins, Scottish Fire & Rescue
Service; Safer Communities and Community Justice Manager; Senior Policy
Advisor, Communities and Partnership Manager (para 1 – 4) and Democratic
Services Officer, J Turnbull, SBC.

1. **WELCOME**

The Chair opened the online meeting and welcomed Chief Inspector Vincent Fisher, Police Scotland and Group Commander Tony Collins, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, to their first meeting.

2. **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the meeting held on 5 February 2021. With reference to paragraph 2.5(b) of the Minute of 6 February, Chief Superintendent McKenzie advised that statistics relating to sexual crime referrals were included in the police report.

DECISION

APPROVED the Minute

3. **PROGRESS REPORTS/UPDATES ON SERVICE MATTERS - POLICE SCOTLAND**

3.1 Chief Superintendent John McKenzie began by introducing Chief Inspector Vincent Fisher to the meeting explaining that he would be a great addition to the Division particularly with regard to road safety with his experience in road policing. He advised that Superintendent Angus MacInnes (Partnerships) moved to a new role and his replacement would commence on 27 February 2021. Ten probationer police officers had also been appointed, all of which had a connections with the Scottish Borders, recruitment would continue throughout 2021. With regard to Covid-19, Chief Superintendent McKenzie reiterated that the four Es approach continued with enforcement in place for those breaching travel restrictions. He added that increased police presence on the main trunk routes within the Borders had resulted in a number of drug supply captures.

3.2 Chief Superintendent McKenzie went on to advise that he was supporting the introduction of body worn cameras for front line police officers, and he made mention of the consultation and welcomed Board members' comments. The cameras would assist with evidence gathering and protect officers and the public. He further advised that there had been an increase in Taser Hubs to prevent police officers having to travel to uplift their taser. A wider discussion would take in 2021 regarding the increase in taser officers in the Scottish Borders, with updates brought to the Board. Regarding the Quarter 3

Scrutiny Report, he highlighted the difference in the profile of Criminal activity for Group 2 crimes. There had been a 16 crime increase relating to people engaging in online sexual exposure and extortion for money which was classified as a Group 1 crime. In addition Group 2 sexual crimes had decreased. However, there had been an increase in online categories. To conclude his report Chief Superintendent McKenzie advised that with reference to paragraph 2.5(b) of the Minute of 6 February, statistics on referrals to victim support groups would be circulated following the meeting.

- 3.3 There had been circulated copies of Police Scotland's Scrutiny Report for Quarter 3 – 2020/2021. Chief Inspector Fisher highlighted the main areas of note within the report: Lockdown and travel restrictions had forced people to stay at home and there had been a general shift from public space criminality towards private space, in particular crimes committed using the internet and telephone. With regard to anti-social behaviour (ASB) relating to Covid-19 breaches, an online reporting mechanism had been introduced which made it easier to report such incidents. These changes in society were reflected in a 36.1% rise in ASB which was just above the national average of 33.7%. As Chief Superintendent McKenzie had referenced, Group 1 - violent crime had risen by 30 crimes from 72 the previous year. The increase could be attributable to the rise in extortions – from one last year to 16 this year. This was consistent with a significant rise in extortions seen nationally. Online and telephone frauds had also increased with transfers of large sums of money to accounts overseas. Sexual crimes had also increased by 25.7%, again a proportion of these crimes were committed remotely. Referring to the summary report, Chief Inspector Fisher explained that Group 1 – 5 crimes were down 3.6%, housebreakings were down 19.5% and there had also been a reduction in road casualties - down 54%. The rise in bail offences was due to police proactive efforts to ensure that bail conditions were adhered to and victims protected.
- 3.4 Inspector Fisher then highlighted the main points from the Scrutiny Report. Regarding missing persons, the number had falling by 23.3%. However, the number of adults, particular cared for adults, continued to rise. The police were working with NHS Borders to examine possible causation factors to improve the situation. Domestic Abuse incidents had risen, resources had been dedicated to enhance detection of violent crime, with a focus on those with a domestic element (Operation BACRE). There had been no increase in Racially Aggravated Conduct since last year, but there had been a slight increase in those deemed criminal. Hate crimes directed towards police officers accounted for 1/5th. There had been a 25.7% rise in overall Sexual Crime, as reported above this could be attributable to the rise in crimes committed remotely – which had risen by 125%. There had been a fall in reported rapes down from 51 last year to 34. Regarding Drugs supply, production and cultivation, Chief Inspector Fisher referred to the excellent work of the Community Action Teams (CAT) advising that they had searched 73 persons with half of those searches proving positive. The CAT had also carried out 23 premises searches with drugs being recovered from all. There had been a 42% rise in Violent Crime, serious assaults were up 22% on last year (seven crimes). Police Scotland continued to prioritise violent crime and violent criminals and it was hoped performance would improve in Quarter 4. As reported above, ASB had increased, the majority of incidents being attributable to Covid-19 breaches. Chief Inspector Fisher was analysing CAT shift patterns to ensure they aligned with demand in terms of ASB. Acquisitive Crime – Dishonesty and Housebreakings were both down. However, business break-ins were up with a detection rate of 94%. Less traffic has meant less casualties and a drop in fatal, serious and slight injuries. This has been replicated across Scotland. In partnership with Graham Jones, an initiative against rural crime was being introduced which would enable the sharing of intelligence and best practice in terms of prevention and detection. Complaints had remained the same and were largely due to police response to Covid-19 breaches, he was issuing direction to officers with a view to reducing complaint volumes.
- 3.5 To conclude his report Chief Inspector Fisher emphasised the value of the CAT throughout the period. They had been responsible for significant drugs and cash seizures

and proactive persons and vehicle searches. They continued to resolve persistent youth issues and had been instrumental in reducing long standing anti-social behaviour, particularly in Eyemouth, and contributed to a 9% reduction in vandalism. In terms of road safety, they had issued eight ASBO warnings, seized two vehicles, with a further 14 vehicles seized for no insurance. They have also issued 394 parking tickets up from 316 during Q2.

- 3.6 Board members then raised a number of questions which were answered by officers. With regard to including Scam advice packs with food deliveries, Chief Inspector Fisher would investigate. Regarding wildlife crime, an update would be provided at the next meeting. A number of organisations were involved in the partnership against rural crime initiative, including the National Farmers Union (NFU) he would clarify if the Association of Young Farmers Clubs was also involved. Crimestoppers was promoted through social media and the SBC alert system and he encouraged as many people as possible to report incidents.
- 3.7 Ms Smith, Partnership Manager advised that there were five Community Assistance Hubs (CAHs) in the Scottish Border. Weekly meetings were held for each Hub and there were up to 30 organisations attending. The CAHs were a good way to get information out to the community. If anyone wished to attend they were to contact Ms Smith direct. A request for additional police presence on the main trunk roads in Tweeddale was raised.

DECISION

NOTED

(a) **The report; and**

(b) **That the Board supported the introduction of body worn cameras.**

MEMBER

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

4. PROGRESS REPORTS/UPDATE ON SERVICE MATTERS - SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

- 4.1 With reference to paragraph 6 of the Minute of 5 February 2021, Local Senior Officer Stephen Gourlay introduced Group Commander Tony Collins, explaining that Mr Collins had been an integral part of his team for a number of years managing training across the area. A third full time Watch Commander had also been appointed and all retained fire stations now had a full-time support officer. With regard to Covid-19, protective measures had to be introduced in a couple of retained stations but this had not adversely affected availability. In terms of the Chief Fire Officer's vision for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, a report would be considered by their National Board at the end of February, followed by consultation on a number of options in the early summer. LSO Gourlay went on to advise that the Local Fire Plan priorities have been reviewed after the new SFRS national strategy was published. A refreshed Scottish Borders plan will be drafted for board approval. LSO Gourlay further advised that the Smoke Detection legislation for Domestic Dwellings had been deferred until 2022. However, they were continuing to provide and fit detection equipment, which met the standard, to owner occupiers deemed to be at high risk. LSO Gourlay concluded his report by advising that the SFRS were in discussion with NHS Borders about the potential to provide support for asymptomatic testing. They had also been approached by a foodbank in Galashiels to provide assistance.
- 4.2 Group Commander (CG) Tony Collins then presented the SFRS Local Plan Performance report for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2020, copies of which had been circulated with the agenda. GC Collins advised that there had been decreases in all six key indicators: Dwelling Fires; All Fire Casualties; Deliberate Fires, Road Traffic Collisions (RTC); Special Service Categories and Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS). During the period the SFRS responded to 1104 Incidents, a decrease of 138 compared to the same period last year. False alarms accounted for 64% of emergency calls during

the period (down 39 from the previous year). There had been no major incidents for the year to date. Regarding dwelling fires, the SFRS had attended 62, three less than last year, six of which had been started deliberately. 63% of incidents had originating in kitchens. There had been 11 casualties in the period, a reduction of 5% per year. There was also a reduction in deliberate fire setting to 96 incidents in the year to date. The SFRS had attended 35 RTCs, a significant decrease of 35 compared to last year. Hydraulic equipment was used on seven occasions to extricate people trapped in vehicles. There had also been 27 Special Services, a significant decrease of 44 compared to the same period last year. The decrease was linked to the reduction in road traffic due to Covid-19 restrictions.

- 4.3 GC Collins then went on to discuss SFRS Prevention and Protection activities, explaining that inter personal activity had been curtailed so there was a drop in figures. Road safety remained a priority and they were involved in planning a Drivewise initiative which would be delivered remotely with a range of options for schools and head teachers. Mrs Simpson advised that she would forward details to LSO Gourlay of the five young coordinators who would be able to circulate information on the scheme to schools.
- 4.4 In response to question regarding road traffic collisions in Berwickshire, LSO Gourlay advised that this might have been because of freezing weather conditions prior to Christmas. However, it was difficult to quantify as the numbers were so low. Regarding mud on roads from building sites/farms which could cause accidents, LSO Gourlay explained that the SFRS was not involved in collision investigation and this was an area where the Police had responsibility. Chief Inspector Fisher added that they looked at causations, such as road conditions when investigating accidents. Councillor Moffat was asked to forward details of the site concerned to Chief Inspector Fisher following the meeting. Mr Dickson requested more details on arrest referrals to be included in future scrutiny reports.

DECISION NOTED

- (a) **The report; and**
- (b) **Further statistics on referrals to be included in future reports.**

ADJOURNED

The meeting was adjourned between 10.50 am to 11.00 am.

5. SAFER COMMUNITIES PERFORMANCE UPDATE AND KEY ACTIVITIES

- 5.1 There had been circulated copies of the Safer Communities performance report for 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2020. The Safer Communities and Community Justice Manager, Mr Jones, was in attendance. Mr Jones began by advising that some of his staff were still deployed to the Covid-19 response, assisting in Community Assistance Hubs and with the vaccination programme. As part of agile working arrangements the service would be co-located within the Public Protection Unit. He further advised that arrangements had been strengthened in relation to the New Scots Worker who would support the Home Office Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme. The Community Justice Plan would be considered by the Community Planning Strategic Board in March for sign off and delivery, this was a statutory requirement. Chief Inspector Fisher had referenced a Rural Crime Partnership, the first meeting of which was scheduled for the end of February. These meetings would be similar to CAT meetings in terms of format. The Board would be updated on progress at the next meeting. A strategic assessment was due at the end of 2021, this would consider future priorities aligned to the wider Public Protection Service's arrangements. Preliminary work was underway to improve information management linked to the corporate digital strategy.
- 5.2 Mr Jones then went on to discuss the Q3 Scrutiny Report. In terms of ASB he advised that the ASB Working Group had met yesterday. The Group met monthly and agreed

common policy approaches with partners. There was also a Core Group which again met monthly. There were a number of ASB Orders in process for individuals. There had been a decrease in the number of people being monitored for ASB. Early interventions has risen which showed the partnership activity in support of the process. Mr Jones explained that the number of cases discussed at the Core Group had risen, perhaps because people were confined to their homes. Mr Jones explained there were challenges with deploying noise monitoring equipment because of Covid-19 restrictions. There had been a decrease in mediation as face to face meetings were not possible and also the Mediation Officer was committed to the Traveller liaison role during the pandemic. With regard to gender based violence, Mr Jones advised that although police incidents had risen, referrals had reduced because they were now referred to one central generic Advocate based service. In the past referrals had been submitted for a range of services which accounted for the difference in numbers and an individual may have had more than one referral. The CEDAR group was running again which was positive. MARAC continued and numbers had risen which was positive in that these cases were being considered in a multi-agency arena to improve management and safety planning. Mr Jones highlighted the number of domestic abuse repeat referrals advising that regular dialogue occurred to assess if further measures could be taken. Mr Jones concluded his report by advising that it was hoped Drivewise would start up again once the Covid restrictions eased.

- 5.3 In response to a question regarding Syrian families' resettlement to the Scottish Borders, Mr Jones advised that there were nine families currently and an agreement by Council to take another 10. The original families had settled well. Most recent arrivals had been supported and the use of digital options used when appropriate. Regarding the ASB group meeting participants, Mr Jones advised that arrangements were being progressed to invite Link Housing to future ASB Core Group meetings. It was noted that the Violence Against Women Partnership would be more appropriate forum for Mrs Simpson to attend.

DECISION

NOTED the report.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 6.1 Mr Dickson gave an update on the Forensic Examination Unit at NHS Borders, explaining that the facility had been delayed because of Covid-19. The preferred site was part of the former Cauldshiels Ward at the BGH and it had been hoped to have the alterations to the building completed by November 2020. Because of Covid-19 the capital planning team had been diverted and the former Cauldshiels Ward used as contingency Covid Ward 5. It was hoped to stand down Ward 5 when restrictions and vaccinations allowed and to open the Unit in the autumn
- 6.2 The Chair advised that some community councils were looking at introducing new CCTV systems in their communities. He suggested a multi-agency meeting should be scheduled to advise on compatible equipment, maintenance arrangements and compliance with GDPR.

DECISION

NOTED the update on the Forensic Examination Unit

MEMBER

Councillor Robson returned to the meeting during consideration of the above report.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled to be held via Microsoft Teams on Friday, 14 May 2021 at 9.30 am

The meeting concluded at 11.45 am