

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,
14th May, 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.

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, and Democratic Services
Officer, J Turnbull, SBC.

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the online meeting. He advised that this was Mr Dickson's last meeting as his tenure with the NHS Board would end in July. The Chairman thanked Mr Dickson for his valuable contribution to the Board meetings over the years and introduced Mr James Ayling who would replace Mr Dickson from the next meeting.

DECISION

- (a) **ACREED to thank Mr Malcolm Dickson for his valuable contribution to the Police, Fire and Rescue and Safer Communities Board.**
- (b) **NOTED the new NHS representative on the Board was Mr James Ayling.**

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 6.2 the Minute of 6 February, the Chairman thanked Sergeant Walker for advice given to communities with regard to CCTV. With reference to paragraph 6.1 of the Minute, Mr Dickson advised that the Forensic Examination Unit at NHS Borders was now scheduled to open at the end of 2021.

DECISION

APPROVED the Minute.

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

- 3.1 With reference to paragraph 3 of the minute of 5 February 2021, there had been circulated copies of Police Scotland's Scrutiny Report for Quarter 4. Chief Superintendent McKenzie introduced the Q4 report, highlighting the main points from the report. He explained that domestic abuse continued to be a priority, a solvency rate of 76% showed their focus on targeting perpetrators. Support also continued for victims of domestic abuse. The significant rise in Group 2 Crime primarily involved communication offences, the 70% solvency rate was one of the strongest for a Division in Scotland. Violent Crime had increased by 43%, one of the reasons was the rise in threats of extortion driven by online activity and drug activity. There was a 90% solvency rate for serious assault which

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showed the ongoing commitment to targeting violent crime. Inquisitive crime was on the decrease, driven by the lockdown restrictions during the public health crisis, but it was expected this would rise in the next quarter. A continued focus on targeting organised crime has been demonstrated through recent drug recoveries across the Scottish Borders. The focus on intelligence led policing linked to organised crime continued in the Scottish Borders with the aim of safeguarding communities.

- 3.2 The Chief Superintendent then referred to the paper, circulated prior to the meeting, about the reclassification of Dalkeith Custody Centre which has a potential minimal impact on the Scottish Borders. He explained that within the Scottish Border there was a primary centre in Hawick and three ancillary centres at Duns, Eyemouth and Galashiels. On occasions, if Hawick was not available, Dalkeith Custody Centre would normally be used. From a context perspective Hawick was unavailable during 24 shift periods within a full year. The Chief Superintendent acknowledged concerns about police officers having to leave the Scottish Borders to attend St Leonards, if reclassification of Dalkeith was progressed he explained that there would be a quick turnaround with more efficient processing. He added that the refurbishment of Galashiels showed the ongoing CJSD commitment to the Scottish Borders.
- 3.3 The Chief Superintendent then went on to advise of a consultation on the proposed closure of Coldstream Police Station. The station had not been used in an operational sense for a number of years. Members and the public would be asked for their views on the proposed closure. The results of which would be brought back to the Scrutiny Board. In response to a question about retaining a visible police presence in Coldstream, Chief Inspector Fisher explained that the police station was in a state of dilapidation which would increase over time. The Chief Superintendent added that the mobile data devices used by front line officers enable police visibility in Coldstream without the need to return to a police station.
- 3.4 Chief Inspector Fisher then highlighted the main points from the Q4 Performance Report. With regard to the Community Action Team (CAT), the Inspector advised that they had undertaken targeted patrols focussed on youth antisocial behaviour in the Tweeddale and Eyemouth areas. They had also issued 24 warning letters to under 18s, with repeat offenders being visited as a means of early intervention. With regard to drug crime, the CAT had undertaken 84 person searches, 32% of which were positive; 18 misuse of drug warrants had been executed with 94% recoveries of Class A, B and C drugs. Interventions had resulted in £55k of substances and £10k of cash being recovered. In terms of road safety, 77 road traffic offences were detected, with six drivers receiving ASOB warnings, 102 parking fines had been issued. Two motorcycles had been seized in Selkirk and activity continued at Monynut in respect of off-road motorcycles. The CAT has also undertaken night patrols with Northumbria police to deter cross border rural thefts, further partnership working was planned in Q1 of next year.
- 3.5 In response to a question about the 20 mph speed limit, the Chief Superintendent explained that because of limited resources enforcement was based on data that demonstrated that there was a challenge on a particular road. However, he reassured the Board that if there was a 20 mph zone which showed greater risk to the community in terms of accidents then enforcement action would be taken. Chief Inspector Fisher added that the police prioritise areas of greatest risk and speed enforcement was carried out for casualty reduction. With regard to safety cameras, sites were assessed annually to ensure the integrity of the safety camera programme. With regard to organised crime and the cuckooing training package, the Safer Communities and Community Manager, Mr Jones, advised that discussion was underway to align with public protection arrangements and to involve SB Cares staff. Mr Dickson suggested that staff working within mental health and learning difficulties might also benefit from the training and he would discuss further following the meeting. In respect of proxy purchasing of alcohol, Chief Inspector Fisher advised that they were considering a bottle marking initiative in Peebles to track

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back to the point of sale. In terms of parents supplying alcohol, where there was such a situation, the police talked to the parents. The Chief Superintendent added that this was not just a police issue, wider communities and licensing legislation was important and he urged Members to reconsider introducing the Alcohol Byelaw pilot. Mr Jones would also consider if there would be a benefit in reintroducing the 'Don't supply it, Don't buy it' campaign. Regarding response times for the 101 service, the Chief Superintendent advised that the national average was 2 minutes. However, he would bring back figures outlining 101 performance to the next meeting. Mrs Simpson advised that the voluntary sector could assist by providing support in the wider community. They had recently delivered training around cyber security and identity thefts, they had also funded a project to raise awareness of grooming of young people.

DECISION

NOTED the report.

ADJOURNED

The meeting adjourned at 11.05 am to 11.15 am.

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

- 4.1 With reference to paragraph 4 of the Minute of 5 February 2020, Local Senior Officer Gourlay introduced the SFRS Local Performance Plan for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, copies of which had been circulated with the agenda. The LSO advised that it has been a challenging period but locally they were looking forward to blended working arrangements for partnerships and training. Nationally, the Scottish Government were committed to supporting the modernisation of the SFRS, central to this was broadening the role of firefighters in Scotland. A new Scottish Strategic Plan would be generated this year. There would also be a consultation around the management of Unwanted Fire Alarm signals. LSO Gourlay further advised that 12 local fire stations had been used to deliver asymptomatic testing, as part of a partnership approach, which had received a positive community response.
- 4.2 Group Commander (GC) Tony Collins then went on to highlight the main points from the performance report, explaining that dwelling fires, all fire casualties, deliberate fires, road traffic collisions and special service casualties had all decreased. False alarm equipment failure had also decreased slightly. He explained that the SFRS had attended 1,500 incidents over the last year, which was down 159 from the previous year, of which 57% of these related to Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS). There had been no major incidents in the year to date. With regard to Prevention and Protection activities, an update had been circulated with the agenda. Although performance activity had been severely curtailed because of restrictions, the SFRS had recommended high risk home safety visits and would start visiting businesses and schools when it was appropriate to do so. In response a question regarding road traffic collisions in Berwickshire, Mr Gourlay advised that the SFRS only attended when intervention was required and they did not get involved in collision investigation. The recent fatal fire investigation had been referred to the Procurator Fiscal and appropriate safety measures would be issued. Regarding the trends relating to all deliberate fire and UFAS with peaks in quarter 1 and quarter 2 respectively. LSO Gourlay explained that deliberate fires increased during the lighter nights, drier weather and Easter holidays and they had an appropriate tactical action plan in place. The decrease in UFAS was probably due to schools returning, with primary schools and nurseries being one of the largest offenders. Most UFAS's came from a collector service with no contact from the site, this might be one of the options that was explored in the consultation. With regard to SEPA identifying potential fire risks to the SFRS, LSO Gourlay explained that they had a good working relationship with SEPA and it would be useful to have an awareness but that the SFRS had no role in preventing fly tipping. To conclude his report GC Collins explained that as well as assisting with asymptomatic testing the SFRS were discussing assisting the NHS with surge testing.

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LSO Gourlay then referred to the updated 2021 SFRS Local Fire and Rescue Plan, copies of which had been circulated with the agenda. He explained that the priorities remained the same with the focus on delivering in partnership. There would be a new Scottish Strategic Plan when the Local Plan would be refreshed again. In response to questions regarding flood rescue he discussed the resource for swift water rescue in the Scottish Borders and opportunities to upskill stations for flood level response based on past incidents. He would arrange a demonstration later this year when restrictions allowed. With regard to cross border support he advised that cooperation happened but the percentage was small.

DECISION

- (a) **NOTED the report.**
- * (b) **AGREED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL approval of the 2021 SFRS Local Plan, attached to the Minute.**

MEMBER

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

5. SAFER COMMUNITIES

- 5.1 With reference to paragraph 5 of the Minute of 5 February 2021, there had been circulated copies of the Safer Communities Performance report from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. The Safer Communities Justice Manager, Mr Jones, advised that the some staff were still deployed to the Covid-19 response, assisting Community Assistance Hubs which had impacted some of the Teams' work. However, they has been able to sustain antisocial behaviour activity, the violence against women partnership and MARAC by utilising Microsoft Teams. The Rural Crime Partnership had met twice, areas covered including thefts in communities and how to improve information flow to target a response. Mr Jones further advised that a member of staff attended the South of Scotland Visitor Management Planning Group. The Group discussions included rural crime and salmon poaching and there was an opportunity to manage information flow to remote parts of the Scottish Borders. The Animal Control Officer and the CAT had been discussing dog fouling reports and their classification to improve response. There had already been two successful enforcement actions.
- 5.2 Mr Jones then discussed the performance report highlighting the main points and responding to questions. With regard to the young driver's scheme Mr Jones explained that it had reclassified as a charity to access funds. The Older Drivers Scheme was supported by the community safety officer and the young drivers the Institute of Advance Motorists. Covid had impacted upon delivery during 2020 and 2012. With regard to RSLs response to requests for relocation of vulnerable tenants experiencing antisocial behaviour, Mr Jones advised that he would pass on the comments to the Housing Associations. With regard to the Mediation Officer's role with the travellers in Selkirk, Mr Jones explained that his role was to satisfy Scottish Government's requirements for gypsy travellers during the pandemic. Since 26 April numbers at the site had been dispersing. Inspector Fisher added that the police had been aware of tensions in the community and patrols had been increased in the interests of the travellers and the local community. This commitment was likely to continue until the restrictions fully lift and the site opened commercially.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled to be held via Microsoft Teams on Friday, 27 August 2021 at 9.30 am.

The meeting concluded at 12.45 pm.