

FALKIRK COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, FALKIRK on THURSDAY 12 JUNE 2014 at 9.30 A.M.

COUNCILLORS:

Allyson Black
John McLuckie
Charles MacDonald
Baillie Joan Paterson
Provost Pat Reid

OFFICERS:

Fiona Campbell, Head of Policy, Technology and Improvement
Colin Moodie, Depute Chief Governance Officer
Brian Pirie, Democratic Services Manager

ALSO ATTENDING:

Jim Cattanach, Divisional Business Assurance Officer, Police Scotland
Gary Laing, Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Amy McGregor, Inspector, Police Scotland
Ken McLeod, Superintendent, Police Scotland
Mandy Patterson, Acting Chief Inspector, Police Scotland

S13. APOLOGY

An apology was intimated on behalf of Baillie Buchanan.

S14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

S15. MINUTES

Decision

- (a) The minute of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 13 May 2014 was approved, and
- (b) The committee noted the minute of the meeting of the Performance Panel held on 29 May 2014 and requested that a summary report on key issues identified by the Performance Panel to date be submitted to the next meeting.

S16. POLICE SCOTLAND – FALKIRK AREA COMMAND PERFORMANCE REPORT

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services presenting the local performance report by the Local Commander, Police Scotland. The report also included information on road collisions and the mapping of these incidents along with a paper on the proposed changes to the policing model operated across the Forth Valley division.

Local Commanders are required, in terms of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, to report performance of local policing as measured against the Local Policing Plan and to provide information about complaints against the police or in regard to policing.

Superintendent McLeod gave a presentation on the detail of the report which covered the period from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 and highlighted the performance of local policing across the Falkirk Council area in accordance with the local policing plan.

The committee discussed the factors contributing to a reduction in instances of anti-social behaviour. Acting Chief Inspector Patterson attributed the reduction to a number of factors including:- a change in the nature of antisocial behaviour, the strong partnership arrangements at the local divisional level (including youth workers and parents) and the proactive early engagement by Police Scotland noting that this had contributed to a decrease in the number of antisocial behaviour orders issued.

Members questioned the increase in shoplifting of lower value products (in general shoplifting had decreased over the period) and questioned whether this could be attributed to the impact of the Welfare Reform programme. Acting Chief Inspector Patterson was unable to make a direct correlation but explained the referral process which is in place in the event that a person arrested for shoplifting was considered to be vulnerable.

In response to a question, Superintendent McLeod stated that the number of hate crimes recorded may be attributable to a cultural change, over many years, where victims felt more willing to report instances of such crimes to the police.

Superintendent McLeod then gave a presentation on the newly introduced deployment model within Forth Valley and in Falkirk in particular.

Following consultation with staff, a new deployment model which better aligned response and community shifts had been introduced on 12 May 2014. The presentation highlighted the arrangements for community policing at ward level in particular. Overall, the community teams made up 46% of the operational establishment in Forth Valley division, with 72 officers covering the Falkirk command.

The presentation also highlighted the resources available at the regional and national level and summarised the impact of the forthcoming Commonwealth Games on local policing.

The committee sought clarification on the likely impact of the changes at the local level, emphasising the benefits in having continuity in the allocation of community officers - both for local members and for communities. Superintendent McLeod stated that the model would take time to bed in but did not expect there to be a negative impact as a consequence of the changes. He confirmed that he would be undertaking a review after 6 months and he would seek the views of elected members.

In terms of the previous model, there had been regular engagement between local police officers, elected members and the community – including the regular attendance of officers at each community council meeting. Members felt ‘disengaged’ with Police Scotland and sought assurances that the previous levels (prior to the creation of Police Scotland) of engagement would be maintained. In response, Acting Chief Inspector Patterson stated that the rationale for the change was to ensure that resources are better deployed to the benefit of the community and to meet demand. Community officers would continue to attend community council meetings, subject to operational requirements - however having heard members, Acting Chief Inspector Patterson undertook to meet with local members to raise the profile of the arrangements within each the ward and to provide ward level reports to community councils and elected members.

Decision

The committee noted the performance on the local policing plan and the newly introduced policing model.

S17. SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE – FALKIRK & WEST LOTHIAN COMMAND PERFORMANCE REPORT

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services presenting the local performance report by the Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Local Senior Officers were now required, in terms of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, to report on performance as measured against the Local Fire and Rescue Plan 2013.

The Local Fire and Rescue Plan for 2014 -2017 had been approved by Council on 14 May 2014.

Gary Laing, Local Senior Officer, provided a detailed summary of the report.

The report set out quarter 4 (1 January to 31 March 2014) outcomes in relation to accidental dwelling fires, non domestic property fires, deliberate secondary fires, road traffic collisions and unwanted fire signals. For comparison purposes, the report included Scotland and West Lothian area performance information.

Additional information was also provided on special service incidents (which included road traffic collisions), violence to crews, incidents involving alcohol or drugs and smoking related activities. Mr Laing also outlined the work being carried out in terms of preventative activities such as premises audits, community engagement talks and visits and the work of the home safety visit programme.

The committee sought clarification on the rationale for undertaking leaflet drops to nearby schools as part of the proactive diversionary programmes aimed at reducing deliberate secondary fires. Mr Laing stated that empirical evidence, as shown by hot spots, indicated that such action could reduce the instances of fire raising.

Members then discussed the arrangements for home safety visits and sought information on the number of visits undertaken and the number of detectors fitted as a consequence. Mr Laing explained that of 223 visits to premises which were deemed high risk, 64 detectors had been fitted. He explained the process for requesting a home visit and highlighted that of the 223 properties visited, the vast majority already had detectors fitted when the visits were made. He further explained that the Service fitted battery operated detectors. It was the practice, on cost grounds, not to fit hardwired devices.

The committee discussed the information provided on occurrences of unwanted fire alarm signals. Mr Laing confirmed that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service did not charge for attending unwanted fire alarm signals but would soon introduce charging for providing certain services. Generally, a charge would be made if there was no threat to personal safety.

Decision

The Committee noted the quarter 4 performance, as attached at appendix 1 to the report.