

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.