

SE8. Police Scotland – Falkirk Area Command Performance

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provided an overview of the Police Scotland performance report for the period April 2015 to March 2016. Appended to the report were: Performance Falkirk Council Area April – March 2015/16; Performance Report Police Scotland; Scottish Crime Recording Standard, and an extract from the Scottish Police Authority's Review of Governance in Policing.

The committee sought an update on the number of community police officers. Steven McAllister advised that there had been a change to the deployment model. Previously there had been larger numbers of community officers but they were often drawn away from community work to deal with other incidents. Now, although there were a reduced number of community officers, they were dedicated ward officers. This model had received commendation at the Scottish Parliament. Officers' attendance at community council meetings had improved which had also resulted in positive feedback. In order to evaluate the model independently research had been commissioned which would be made available to the committee for information.

Following further discussion on the policing model in place locally, Steven McAllister advised that there were five sergeants to each inspector, with nine constables to each sergeant. This redressed the balance of individuals' responsibility and provided an opportunity for a saving in higher cost salaries while providing more front line constables. No diminution of service was anticipated following the introduction of this model.

Members discussed the public satisfaction figures in relation to self-critical assessment and in comparison to Council satisfaction rates commenting that there was scope for improvement from the reported figures which ranged between 70% and 50%. Steven McAllister stated that making a comparison with Council figures was not entirely appropriate as Police Scotland often dealt with people in extremis. He advised that when the local public satisfaction rates were compared against the national data the performance locally was better than average.

The committee sought an update on the matters raised within section 4.4 of the report, namely:-

- funding for CCTV;
- the funding of joint provision for stray dogs;
- parking enforcement, and
- Police Scotland's role in the management of parades and processions.

The convener highlighted for the committee's attention that he along with the Leader of the Council and the Public Protection Portfolio Holder would be meeting with the police to take forward discussions on these key areas. Members commented that it was important to work in partnership in order to be constructive and highlighted the role of the committee in scrutinising Police Scotland's performance locally.

Steven McAllister stated that in relation to parking enforcement there required to be further dialogue between the police and the Council following the retirement of traffic wardens and move towards decriminalisation. In relation to Police Scotland's role in the management of parades and processions he advised that the police complied with the regulations relating to processions. There had been previous meetings with Council officers where each organisations roles and responsibilities had been clarified and he did not anticipate any issues going forward. It was stated that there were a variety of approaches nationally to the funding of CCTV provision and that this was not the sole responsibility of Police Scotland. He noted that regarding joint provision for stray dogs there had been concern in communities. Discussions continued between Falkirk, Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils and Police Scotland in order to achieve a solution going forward.

The committee requested a report to the next meeting to provide an update on:-

- (1) any outcomes arising from discussions between the Council and Police Scotland;
- (2) funding for CCTV, the funding for joint provision for stray dogs, parking enforcement and Police Scotland's role in the management of parades and processions, and
- (3) proposals for a revised reporting format and content of future Police Scotland performance reports.

In response to a question on illegal and irresponsible parking, Damian Armstrong stated that ward officers were often engaged in tackling these issues and that where the public reported issues an officer would attend where possible. He highlighted that ward officers were committed to dealing with issues raised by communities.

Members sought information on how Police Scotland worked to reassure communities where there had been instances of break-ins. Steven McAllister highlighted the role of the ward officers in providing reassurance to communities. Damian Armstrong advised that there had been a significant reduction in housebreaking. Where required the Community Investigation Unit would focus on particular areas and this was supplemented by ward officers visiting individual residents. Residents were offered advice on security of sheds, cars and other potential targets. In specific instances the Prevention Intervention Team would also carry out leaflet drops to ensure people knew how to reduce their risk of being a victim of housebreaking. He also advised that he would ensure housebreaking was included in his weekly article in the Falkirk Herald.

The committee asked for information on the performance figures for detection in Falkirk. Steven McAllister advised that the information related to Forth Valley but that the division was one of the strongest performers nationally. Some information was only available on a Forth Valley basis but where possible Falkirk specific information would be presented. Following a question on response times, Amy McGregor stated that she would provide

members with a link to the online national database after the meeting which can provide Council level analysis.

A question was raised about how often illegal or irresponsible parking issues were reported to the police and how often these concerns were responded to. Damian Armstrong stated that there were a number of notification methods and that ward officers would visit places known to suffer from such issues without prompt and these visits were not counted in figures. He highlighted the example of parking at the Kelpies and that engagement was ongoing with Falkirk Community Trust as a public education approach was required alongside enforcement.

Members sought information on what scale of issue was presented by 'legal highs'. Damian Armstrong confirmed that there was now legislation in place to tackle the issue which was a priority. Fiona Campbell stated that the Falkirk Drug and Alcohol Partnership was monitoring the impact of 'legal highs' through information from the Scottish Ambulance Service and NHS Forth Valley. In terms of hospital attendances related to 'legal highs' the health service did not see a significant number of incidents. There was ongoing educational prevention work in the Council's high schools.

The committee asked why the number of domestic abuse incidents had increased 10.4% against the same period last year. Damian Armstrong highlighted the success of the domestic abuse unit which carried out work including looking at an offender's previous history. This has led to an increase in historical cases being reported and was a part of the reason for the increase alongside increased confidence in the police to deal with such cases.

Members asked about card skimming devices used at ATMs. Damian Armstrong stated that there had been no confirmed instances of skimmers being used in Falkirk. The Prevention and Intervention Team had worked with local businesses on preventative measures including putting up information signage on the risks.

The committee commented on the increased provision of school based officers, with each high school in the area now having an officer based in it. Steven McAllister highlighted the positive partnership between the local authority and police on this project and that school based officers were now integral to the model of deployment. There were good links between the school based officers and ward officers.

Decision

The committee requested that a report be brought to the next meeting to cover:-

- (1) any outcomes arising from discussions between the Council and Police Scotland;**

- (2) funding for CCTV, the funding for joint provision for stray dogs, parking enforcement and Police Scotland's role in the management of parades and processions, and
- (3) proposals for a revised reporting format and content of future Police Scotland performance reports.