

## **SE9. Police Scotland – Falkirk Area Performance**

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services presenting the latest performance report on behalf of Police Scotland.

Superintendent Lundie gave an introduction to the performance report highlighting notable areas of specific interest.

The committee then asked questions, highlighting issues in regard to community policing. Following a question on why community officers were not available for community events on Sundays Mr Lundie stated that while officers were available for local meetings there was also a need to deploy officers into communities and as such there was a balance to be struck. The shift patterns recognised the need for this balance. Chief Inspector Armstrong added that where there were specific issues he would be happy to look at this.

Following a question Superintendent Lundie explained local ward plans and how they related to the Area Plan. The ward plans, he explained, provided focus on location and local priorities and set out what the community expected of the police locally. Given the focus on local delivery the committee asked why police offices were not always staffed and callers were directed to a contact centre based in Edinburgh. Chief Inspector Armstrong stated that footfall at offices had decreased over the years and it was more effective to have officers on the streets rather than in an office. The move to a call centre had been introduced prior to 2013 and was in recognition of the need to optimise resources. He undertook to relay the member in question concerns and comment that this affected public confidence. Superintendent Lundie added that his officers had a good communication system with strong links to councillors and community councils. Feedback suggested that the public was happy with their first contact with the police. He did recognise that some would be disappointed with a telephone conversation. Chief Inspector Armstrong stated that he wanted officers out in the community. Visibility was important. He then stated that the Public Service Team (PST) had been established in the area and explained that this had been proven to be effective. This was a model which was now being trialled nationally. If a call is made to the public 101 number it would be picked up by the PST. An officer from the team would contact the member of the public and would try to address the issue. If this was not possible a call-out could be arranged. This allowed the public expectation to be managed whilst dealing with the issue. The PST was made up of police officers – in the main those on 'restrictions'.

Following comments on the communication between community officers and councillors, Chief Inspector Armstrong explained that officers recognised that different elected members had different preferred means of communication. There seemed to be a breakdown in some cases. Chief Inspector Armstrong undertook to look into the particular issue raised and the broader issue more generally.

The committee then discussed the performance report.

Members highlighted the number of statutory stop and searches undertaken (960). Chief Inspector Armstrong highlighted that in May 2017 a new code of practice had been introduced, and non statutory consensual searches ceased. Searches were now intelligence led. Officers were, he said, trained to explain the reason for searches. The key was that the searches were now solely intelligence led with a 30-40% success rate. Officers provided the public with an information slip after the search which included details on how to complain if they felt the search had been unfair or unwarranted.

Following a question on Operation Willpower and in particular in regard to officers targeting Transit vans Chief Inspector Armstrong and Detective Chief Inspector Thompson summarised local operations to target acquisitive crime. Forth valley was a small division with good road links into and out of the area and consequently the area was targeted by organised crime from outside the area. The targeting of acquisitive crime, including theft of transit vans, was a priority. DNA identification had proved to be invaluable with specialists having to work hard to stay ahead of criminals, who attempted to rid scenes of all evidence.

The committee praised the 'School Squad' initiative and asked for an update on the project. Chief Inspector Armstrong explained the initiative and said that initiatives such as this tended to be effective for limited periods. Schools had engaged with the project which had involved the use of visual aids to address the issue of irresponsible parking in and around primary schools. Schools had engaged with the project and some had asked to purchase their own 'squad'. However Chief Inspector Armstrong stated that the challenge was continued and there was a role for parents and schools and it was important parents took responsibility for safety.

Detective Thompson explained why the detection rate for rape had decreased by 18.1%. This was due to two factors. The first was that around 1/3 were non recent and as a consequence the gathering of evidence was more difficult. Secondly the force took a victim centred approach which meant that if the victim decided at a point, in which was a difficult and traumatic process, to not proceed with the allegation it would not be taken to detection but would be lodged as a reported rape.

## **Decision**

**The committee noted the report and acknowledged progress by the external organisation in meeting Council priorities.**