

## **SE22. Police Scotland – Falkirk Area Performance**

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services presenting the latest performance report from Police Scotland. The report included as appendices:

- Area performance report for the period April 2019 – June 2019
- Local policing priority updates for the reporting period.

Chief Inspector Armstrong provided a summary of the key activities during the period under the four policy priorities:

- Responsive to the concerns of our community
- Enhancing our collective resilience to emerging threats
- Protecting people most at risk from harm
- Promoting confidence through our actions

The committee highlighted speeding as a local concern and remarked that it was unhelpful that people identified the location of speed enforcement activity on social media. Members noted that there had been an increase in van thefts and break-ins in the Bonnybridge area and suggested that this could be linked to the proximity to the motorway network. Chief Inspector Armstrong concurred but considered that this had peaked. He explained that a team based at Falkirk had co-ordinated activities between neighbouring eastern divisions and this had achieved results. A number of break-ins had been by organised groups. Additional patrols had been put in place in risk areas such as Bonnybridge and Denny. Technology such as Automatic Number Plate Registration (ANPR) had been used to good effect. A number of the vehicles used in break-ins had themselves been stolen which made catching perpetrators more difficult. A number of cars which had been stolen had been retrieved at Grangemouth Docks, having been stolen to order. He added that road policing arrangements had been changed to ensure that there was a presence during the night with pursuit capability and work was ongoing in regard to thefts and break-ins.

The committee asked if the incoming area commander, Chief Inspector Stewart if he planned to change the community policy model to include weekend working. Chief Inspector Stewart stated that he was committed to community planning but would have to review the model before he would make such an undertaking. Chief Inspector Armstrong stated that there had been alterations to the model – community officers had been removed from night time shifts which meant that they could be in their areas until 1am. Officers did work on Sundays but not routinely.

The committee pointed out that detection rates were mixed across the various crime group indicators, with detection decreasing in serious assault and robbery. Chief Inspector Armstrong explained that at the end of the reporting year the rates tended to rise, for a number of reasons and he was comfortable with the reported performance. For example in the case of robberies the detection may be reliant on examination of forensic evidence

and at times there was a backlog in the examination of forensic materials. In regard to instances of domestic abuse he stated that this was a particularly difficult crime to solve as often there were no independent witnesses. Some domestic abuse cases could also be passed on to the National crime unit.

Councillor Balfour left the meeting at this point.

The detection rate for domestic abuse was the same as the previous year. He was not duly concerned at this point about current detection rates. Chief Inspector Stewart agreed and stated that he was confident that for serious assault and robberies the detection rate would increase, again in part due to the outcome of forensic examination.

Following a question Chief Inspector Armstrong explained the various reporting strictures which ensured that senior officers were aware of local issues, including briefings for the Chief Constable.

Following a comment that instances of domestic abuse in adults had reduced (544 to 489), Chief Inspector Armstrong agreed that in part this was due to good publicity campaigns and praised the 'Ask for Angela' campaign which had had an impact on the number of reported sexual crimes in Falkirk (decreased by 67). He praised the work of partner agencies and highlighted the role of the Falkirk Alcohol and Drug Partnership. He also highlighted a concerted social media campaign- all of which had an effect on the positive performance for Falkirk.

The committee remarked that policing had changed since 2013 when Police Scotland was formed and appeared to be more centralised. Members stated that there was more work to be done in regard to community confidence in the police – in particular in regard to responses to reports of crime. Often, members stated, the public do not call the police because they do not expect a response, even in the case of violent crime. Chief Inspector Armstrong acknowledged that the public wanted trust and confidence in the police. He explained that often the first contact with the police was by phone. He stated that a model had been trialled in Forth Valley and then rolled out nationally which used a triage model to ensure calls were graded properly, calls were dealt with on the phone if possible and officers released to attend more serious incidents. The model released capacity. He stated it was not easy to hear members' comments but praised the commitment and dedication of all officers.

The C.A.M model would he anticipated yield positive results as would the change in community police officers shift patterns discussed earlier. He stated that the force had to manage public expectations. It was not always possible or practicable to respond immediately to every call.

The committee praised a reduction in violence and anti social behaviour in Falkirk stating that the night time economy was now a safer place. Chief Inspector Armstrong agreed and praised the work of the national resource,

the Safer Communities Task Force, which had focussed on Camelon and was now working in the town centre.

The committee then discussed the performance in relation to drugs. Citing Denny as an example the convener stated that a recent meeting with local businesses had been a success. However while it seemed that issues around drugs had quietened down they remained a concern in the community. The convener stated that users did not seem to hide their addiction noting that often addicts queued for methadone while children were going to school. Chief Inspector Armstrong concurred that drugs remained an issue and a priority. He cited work with agencies such as the ADP and other agencies to provide support as well as enforcement. Drugs was not an issue which Police Scotland could deal with alone. He cited work in Hallglen, set out in the report, which showed that a difference could be made. Drugs were prevalent across all communities. It was important to provide users with support, through pathways for example. Not all users committed crimes to support their addiction although some did. The role of the ADP was crucial, as was that of other partnerships across the area. Police were out and about in communities and had increased the number of enforcement actions. However the issue had to be tackled holistically. It was commented that the police were not visible on the streets and that police offices had closed reducing opportunities for contact. Chief Inspector Armstrong explained the rationale for the closing of police offices nationally. This was part of an estates management strategy. He commended the current hub model. Again referring to earlier comments, Chief Inspector Armstrong stated that it was disappointing that the public did not feel able to contact police officers.

The committee noted that the number of instances of stop and search had increased dramatically. Chief Inspector Armstrong stated that searches were now more consensual than previously and were recorded appropriately. They should be made on the right people at the right time. The increase was in part due to an increase in searches when addressing community concerns.

## **Decision**

**The Committee considered the performance of Police Scotland and approved the report and acknowledge progress by the organisation in meeting its priorities.**