



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF POLICE, FIRE and COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**WEDNESDAY 12 JUNE 2024
VIA DIGITAL MEETINGS FACILITY**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor Akhtar
Councillor Allan
Councillor Hampshire (Chair)
Councillor McGuire
Councillor McMillan
Councillor Trotter

Police Scotland

Mr B Leathes, Chief Inspector
Mr A Hall, Superintendent

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Mr M Landels, Group Commander
Mr E Whitson, Station Commander

Other Councillors Present

Councillor C McFarlane

Council Officials Present:

Ms C Rodgers, Head of Communities
Mr K Black, Safer Communities Team Leader
Lynn Crothers, Service Managers – Protective Services

Clerk:

Ms R Crichton
Ms E Barclay

Apologies:

Councillor McGinn
Councillor Menzies

Declarations of Interest:

None

1. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL: POLICE, FIRE & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, 15 NOVEMBER 23

The minutes of the Police, Fire and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee held on 15 November 23 were approved.

2. POLICE SCOTLAND SCRUTINY REPORT – THE LOTHIAN AND SCOTTISH BORDERS – Q3 & Q4 2023/24

Police Scotland had submitted a scrutiny report to update members on their work during Quarters 3 and 4, 2023/24.

Chief Inspector (CI) Ben Leathes, Police Scotland, gave context regarding the figures on population in East Lothian which were based on 2019 Scottish Government figures whereas 2022 references East Lothian's population at 112,300 so it was important to view the further population increases which will have an impact on crime totals. CI Leathes then spoke in detail to the report, highlighting the local policing priorities of:

- i) Protecting the most vulnerable people
 - ii) Reducing violence & anti-social behaviour
 - iii) Reducing acquisitive crime
 - iv) Improving Road Safety and
 - v) Tackling serious and organised crime,
- and provided a thorough outline of the report's contents.

Councillor McMillan asked if there was more that could be done around reducing drug use and deaths and could more work be done around early prevention work. CI Leathes confirmed if the Police taken enforcement action against anyone supplying drugs and there is a vulnerability present, they would be referred immediately. He added that support from wider family to help drive a person out addiction as well as support from local communities. CI Leathes highlighted the work of MELDAP and felt the more visible the support is the more it would be of benefit.

Councillor Akhtar asked if CI Leathes could say more around the connections and links with East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership to tackle anti-social behaviour and poor mental health. He thanked the volunteers who give their time for the Police Youth Volunteers as this is something want to see grow. He added this comes with considerable extra work for Officers involved therefore this is an area he would always welcome support from further adult volunteers, and this is something they are actively recruiting for. CI Leathes explained these groups were a good opportunity to divert away from anti-social behaviour by offering activities for young people. CI Leathes confirmed they do get a report regarding drug and alcohol use from the Health and Social Care Partnership and highlighted around 15% of calls, which works out around 450 calls per month, to the Police are related to mental health. He provided an update on work being done nationally to try and direct the call to the best service at the point of the call being made however if there is a degree of risk to that person or others around them the Police will be asked to attend. They would then approach the H&SCP to look for supports for that individual using the IRD process for adults.

Councillor Akhtar also stated if it was too early to comment on the Community Speed Watch at today's meeting could an update be given at the next Committee. CI Leathes confirmed there are now a number of volunteers who are going to go through vetting and then the programme can be rolled out. He noted the programme in Fife has been successful with very few problems and welcomes the support from Members and the community.

Responding to a question from Councillor Hampshire, CI Leathes explained online crime tends to be split into two areas; sexual and financial crime which targets different age groups. He stated at a recent community safety meeting a teacher from Rosehill gave an update on the great work going on in schools and the offering of parenting advice to make them aware of

safeguarding practices for their young people. CI Leathes stated with financial crimes, banks take on a large responsibility to make it more difficult for people to fall victim to crime and the police advise them through a national division and more locally the police can run prevention inputs in areas that will get the best target audience.

In a second question, Councillor Hampshire asked if there was anyway the police could restrict the travel of young people who have been causing problems in areas they don't live in. CI Leathes stated the problems that arise at locations in East Lothian may be caused by young people who do not live there so there are various options available; there is a national division within Police Scotland working with the bus services to understand how these issues occur and how bus companies can work with the police to educate young people on the responsible use of buses. He confirmed drivers will contact the police if there is a group on board causing issues and the police are happy to intervene if the driver feels they are under the influence or not behaving onboard the bus and he is about to send out a letter to all parents of secondary age children to remind them of the responsibility they have over the summer holidays.

Councillor Hampshire also asked if there was any update on Police estate within East Lothian. CI Leathes confirmed they were engaged with their central estates team to formulate a plan to look forward at what the Police estate will look like for the next 20 to 30 years as the six buildings within the county are old, have limited storage and contain cells which are no longer used so the use of the buildings has changed dramatically over the years. These buildings will therefore be looked at to see if they are still fit for purpose.

In response to a question from Councillor Trotter, CI Leathes stated we are now better able to understand the problems that drug use leads to and there is a tangible pathway to supporting people. He added that drug deaths do continue to occur which is why a large part of work is around enforcement and trying to refer individuals with the worst habits and offending records for support. CI Leathes confirmed the police are now much more aware of what drugs are in the community and stated they are much easier to access than they used to be as they can be posted directly to a person's house if they purchased online.

Councillor Trotter also asked if there was an early warning system in place should a large group of young people board a bus heading to a specific location or could one be introduced. CI Leathes confirmed bus drivers have a radio and they are actively encouraged to radio in if they have concerns.

Councillor McMillan stated for the most part we receive a really good police service and noted the values of the Police Scotland integrity, fairness and respect priorities placed by the Chief Constable around trust, confidence and performance and highlighted evidence of those being carried out in community programmes. He gave thanks to colleagues in the anti-social behaviour team working alongside Police Scotland officers to address the behaviour on buses and in terms of managing threat, risk and harm, he felt communities should be reassured by a police presence. Councillor McMillan also highlighted the challenges faced by Police Scotland and urged for the process of calling 101 to make local reports to be looked at. He thanked CI Leathes and all staff for their report.

Councillor Hampshire stated everyone is aware of the difficult financial situation Police Scotland are in along with their partners in the local authority and the health board however if they all work together, they can continue to tackle the crime that is affecting communities. He noted things will be difficult, but the public should be assured we are doing all we can to make sure communities are as safe as they can be.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the report.

3. SCOTTISH FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE - LOCAL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR EAST LoTHIAN - Q3 & Q4 2023/24

Group Commander (GC) Mark Landels noted the retirement of the local Senior Officer, Hilary Sangster after 30 years combined service with former Lothian and Borders Police, Lothian Borders Fire Service and then the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. He acknowledge her commitment to improving safety within East Lothian and wider areas and thanked her for all her work. GC Landels welcomed Elliot Whitson as Station Commander for prevention and protection.

Group Commander Mark Landels, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service presented a report on the performance of the Fire and Rescue Service in East Lothian over Quarters 3 and 4 of 2023/24. He spoke in detail to the report and highlighted the key indicators of:

- i) Reduction of False Alarms (all)
- ii) Reduction of all accidental fires
- iii) Reduction of Special Service
- iv) Reduction of False Alarms – Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals
- v) Reduction of Special Service – Road Traffic Collisions
- vi) Reduction of Special Service – Fatalities
- vii) Reduction of Special Service – Road Traffic Collision casualties

and provided a thorough outline in each of these areas.

Elliot Whitson, Station Commander (SC) presented the East Lothian Prevention and Protection activities between 1st October 2023 to the 31st March 2024. These included Home Fire Safety Visits, Home Fire Safety Referrals, Partnership Working/Youth Engagement, Fire Safety Support and Education and Safeguarding. He highlighted the reporting period captured bonfire night in 2023 and the bonfire safety work that was undertaken, this included; talks at numerous high schools, primary schools and community groups and utilising social media to reach the wider public. SC Whitson also highlighted work completed by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Community Action Team and their longstanding partnership with Fostering Compassion.

Councillor McMillan asked where risks are published and how much SFRS feel other agencies are involved in helping managing these. GC Landels explained SFRS have a process where crews visit properties and complete Matrix Scoring based system to determine the risk of a site/building and a number of areas are covered in terms including substances stored, hydrants, open water and type of building construction. All this information is then stored within a secure tablet on the fire appliance and are not published for the wider area as some of these facilities are sensitive, but the information is available for emergency partners to utilise at an incident. He gave an example of when these specialised tablets were used in an exercise to evacuate a building and confirmed SFRS routinely exercise with colleagues from Police Scotland.

In response to a question from Councillor Akhtar, GC Landels confirmed each incident would be reviewed on a case by case basis and after the level two incident was reported he immediately contacted CI Leathes and NHS staff to make them aware and that's when discussions took place to remove some of the internal fire loading within some derelict buildings. He explained any recommendations would be made as SFRS discover them to NHS estates for their assistance in reducing wilful fire raising anti-social behaviour but also to reduce the risk of abuse towards firefighters.

Councillor McGuire asked if SFRS could reassure residents in Cockenzie that they would have the necessary specialised equipment to deal with a situation at the planned Battery Energy Storage System. GC Landels confirmed the service has access to an ultra-high pressure lance

which can pierce concrete or metal structures which expels water droplets to reduce the intensity of the fire and negates the need for firefighters to enter the building. He added lithium power batteries take a long time to extinguish and produce a lot of smoke and spoke of a recent incident in Ayrshire where the fire took multiple days to extinguish. GC Landels highlighted the importance of fires of this nature being reported as soon as possible before it turned in a fully developed fire which would be extremely hard to extinguish but the service does have the capability to do this. He noted there were currently three ultra pressure lances in the East of Scotland, one in North Berwick Fire Station.

Responding to questions from Councillor Hampshire, GC Landels explained SFRS have standard operating procedures to deal with several types of incidents, but they do rely on utilities attending these fires to isolate the supply of electricity before tackling the fire. He explained with the correct multiagency approach to electrical fires, SFRS do have the resources and equipment to deal with these incidents.

GC Landels explained the unwanted fire alarm signal policy came into force on 1st of July 2023 for properties such as retail properties, cinemas, swimming pools that do not present a sleeping risk. He stressed that any building with a sleeping risk would still have a fire appliance attending on a blue light response to ensure the safety of those within the property. GC Landels explained if staff attend an incident that is a false alarm, they routinely engage with premises responsible person to offer advice. He explained when a call is made to the service during the night in terms of a commercial property with no sleeping risk they do not find out if anyone attends from the business itself but if smoke or fire is mentioned in a follow on call or an activation in multiple zones of a property the SFRS would attend.

SC Whitson stated the fire service is the enforcing authority under the Fire Scotland Act however they would look to work with the duty holder initially so when an audit officer visits the property, they would give advice and guidance and the issue a letter. He added if they were at immediate fire risk then SFRS did have the ability to prohibit that business.

Councillor McMillan welcomed the report and congratulated Hilary Sangster on her retirement. He added it was good to hear about the partnering and support at Eden Hall between the Police and SFRS, welcomed the number of home fire safety visits and hoped the Tomorrows Young Driver programme would continue given the positive results.

Councillor Allan thanked all involved in the positive report.

Councillor Hampshire also thanked SFRS for their report and the fantastic work they do to keep East Lothian safe. He raised concern about the number of primary fires, and this was something the fire service and the local authority needed to take on to educate young people and try to reduce these numbers.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the Scrutiny Report.

4. TACKLING ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The Executive Director for Place had submitted a report to advise the Committee on the number, type and geographical breakdown of antisocial behaviour complaints received by East Lothian Council during the reporting period (1 October 2023 and 31 March 2024) and to advise on actions taken in response to same.

Kenny Black, Team Manager – Community Protection Team, spoke to the report in detail, highlighting the overall number of Antisocial Behaviour Complaints, themes for complaints

(noise, youth, drug misuse, and others including shouting, swearing and neighbour disputes), a breakdown of complaints by place, comparisons to the equivalent reporting period in 2023/24. Mr Black noted all low-level antisocial behaviour will now be referred to the mediation service, 20 live Antisocial Behaviour Orders in East Lothian, one live eviction cases before Edinburgh Sheriff Court, the Multi-agency Adult Case Monitoring Group were currently monitoring the behaviour of 53 individuals within the community who are involved in more serious, complex and persisting cases of anti-social behaviour. Mr Black made reference to the ongoing work of various groups to address anti-social behaviour and the joint agency work that took place during the reporting period and highlighted the work of the Tasking and Coordinating Group mentioned by CI Leathes earlier. He provided an update on the ongoing work on the review of the antisocial behaviour strategy, and it is anticipated a public consultation will take place later this year followed by formal ratification. Mr Black reported there were 65 joint Police/Council letters sent to parents of children and young people whom the Police had identified as being present in instances and areas affected by anti-social behaviour and gave an update on the work of the Community Protection Officers. He also provided Members with information on the ongoing work within the Community Protection Team including the adoption of a noise app which allows officers to assess and manage noise antisocial behaviour complaints more effectively.

Councillor Trotter asked how the 3% increase in antisocial behaviour broke down into individual areas within the county and if there was one particular area there has been a large increase. Mr Black confirmed there had been an increase in youth related antisocial behaviour in Musselburgh and stated one of the appendices broke down the antisocial behaviour into geographical areas so it would be easy to compare data from this year and last year. He also added that the weekly Tasking and Coordinating (TAC) Group break down the number of complaints by geographical area and compared with the previous year's data down to the same week. Councillor Trotter welcomed this idea as it would be helpful for Community Councils.

Councillor Hampshire asked if there were repeated black spots of antisocial behaviour within East Lothian and what action could be taken to stop that repeating itself in the same location. Mr Black explained the Problem Solving Partnerships (PSP) were formed to deal with areas chronically affected by antisocial behaviour but there are none in place at the moment however if any partner at the weekly meeting thought that an area merited such a response then the team would establish one. He added although there had been an increase in youth related antisocial behaviour within Musselburgh it was not felt this was at the level to require a PSP.

Responding to a second question from Councillor Hampshire, Mr Black explained the team deployed one of their mobile CCTV cameras at the bus stop closest to the Linn Rocks to hopefully act as a deterrent to antisocial behaviour and also capture any evidence that may implicate someone. He added through the weekly group officers have been tasked to attend and patrol that area and said he has a meeting organised with local bus companies to try to publish a joint communication through the media regarding antisocial behaviour on buses and at bus stops.

Councillor McMillan asked if each incident was noted separately rather than the number of calls based on one incident. Mr Black confirmed if a number of calls were received for the same incident then this would be recorded as one complaint.

Responding to further questions from Councillor McMillan, Mr Black stated phone calls received regarding neighbour disputes would be recorded as one incident and explained there are recorded figures for how effective mediation is for these sorts of disputes which he was happy to provide out with the meeting. He confirmed there would be a full consultation

on the new draft antisocial behaviour strategy including the statutory consultees and wider individuals.

Councillor Akhtar asked what potential deployments the team has and what supports are available. Mr Black explained on a Friday and Saturday evening the Council has Community Protection Officers on duty who will deploy to the areas identified as hotspots in the teams mobile CCTV van. He stated there are six mobile CCTV cameras deployed at hotspots and there are neighbourhood outreach workers operating within Haddington on a Saturday. Mr Black added these workers and police officers are deployed based on the TAC correspondence.

Councillor Akhtar thanked Mr Black for his report and highlighted antisocial behaviour bites constituents lives and has a significant impact on neighbourhoods so commended Mr Black and his team for the work they do and individuals who go out within our neighbourhoods to tackle low level antisocial behaviour.

Councillor McMillan echoed Councillor Akhtar's remarks and added although some people can be responsible for antisocial behaviour, he wanted to also remember some of the great work done by young people within East Lothian. He also thanked Mr Black and team for his efforts and for a great report.

Councillor Hampshire stated the antisocial behaviour within East Lothian was minimal but then it does take place it can have an impact on a person's quality of life and the Council needs to make sure if it is happening, it is stopped. He added Community Protection Officers will continue to monitor complaints and will do everything they can to address the issue. Councillor Hampshire encouraged anyone suffering from antisocial behaviour to make the Council aware and it will be investigated, and things will be done to try and stop it taking place. He thanked all officers in the team for their work.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

5. PFCSSC DRAFT ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2024/2025

A draft annual work programme was presented to Committee. This provided the next dates of the Committee; 11 December 2024 and 11 June 2025.

Decision

The Committee were happy to note the programme.

Signed

Councillor Norman Hampshire
Convener of the Police, Fire and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee