

PARTNERSHIPS PANEL.

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,
on 25th November 2014 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors John Hampton (Chair), John Allan. Ian Cavana, Ann Galbraith, Sandra Goldie, William J. Grant, Mary Kilpatrick and Helen Moonie.

Attending: L. Bloomer, Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment; R. Riddiough, Head of Legal and Democratic Services; C. Monaghan, Head of Communities; and J. McClure, Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending: Superintendent Neil Kerr and Chief Inspector Eileen Taylor, Police Scotland; and James Scott, Area Manager, East, North and South Ayrshire and James McNeill, Group Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

1. Opening Remarks.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Councillor Goldie for Chairing the first meeting of this Panel.

2. Declarations of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Council Standing Order No. 17 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

3. Minutes of previous meeting.

The minutes of 9th October 2014 (issued) ([link attached](#)) were submitted and approved.

4. Work Programme and Action Plan.

There was submitted an Action Log and Work Programme for this Panel (issued) ([link attached](#)).

Decided: to agree the Action Log and proposed Work Programme for 2014/15 for this Panel.

5. Variation in order of business.

In terms of Council Standing Order No. 13.2, the Panel agreed to vary the order of business as hereinafter minuted.

6. Progress Against Fire Plan.

There was submitted a report (issued) of 13th November 2014 ([link attached](#)) by the Head of Communities outlining the progress against the Local Fire and Rescue Plan and requesting that Panel Members identify any concerns for consideration by Fire colleagues.

J. Scott, Area Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service then took the Panel through the Performance Report for 1st April to 31st August 2014 outlining statistics and highlighting the priorities identified and those areas being monitored.

Questions were asked by Panel Members in relation to:

- (i) measures taken to reduce accidental fires and the Area Manager advised that the Scottish Government had set key performance indicators to report back on and some targets had numerical value attached to them with there currently being a 10% reduction target on accidental fires and a 5% reduction target on fire casualties which the Fire and Rescue Service aspired to reach by working in conjunction with partnership agencies;
- (ii) the response from school children when Fire and Rescue Service Officers visited schools to explain the danger of making malicious telephone calls and the Area Manager advised that a positive response was received from the children when Officers explained the impact of a malicious call in monetary terms, the danger to road users when an appliance was sent to a 999 call and that this appliance was then not available should a serious incident occur elsewhere;
- (iii) the penalty for those making malicious calls and the Area Manager advised that the mobile phone company can be requested to disable the phone to ensure that the malicious calls did not continue;
- (iv) whether those people making malicious calls were charged by Police Scotland and the Area Manager advised that there had been no recent prosecutions in Ayrshire, however, in another authority CCTV operators had recently identified a person making malicious calls from a telephone box who had subsequently been charged;
- (v) the monitoring of empty buildings and the Area Manager advised that any buildings known to be unoccupied were added to the Derelict and Unoccupied Buildings Register and inspected by Fire Officers to ensure that they were secure; they would attempt to identify who was responsible for the building to discuss concerns with them; and the Fire and Rescue Service would work in liaison with the Council's Building Standards Service to ensure that the buildings were safe and secure;
- (vi) whether incidents of violence against Fire Officers were recorded and the Area Manager advised that in Ayrshire incidences of violence against Fire Officers were low, however, a recent incident had been reported to Police Scotland; and that he could provide figures to the Panel on this if required;
- (vii) the high figure for Maybole, North Carrick and Coylton for non-fire related casualties and whether patterns could be identified and the Area Manager advised that this high number was due to road collisions on the A77;

- (viii) the lack of attendance of Fire Officers at the Carrick Crime Prevention Panel and the Area Manager advised that the Officer who had previously attended this Panel was no longer in post, however, he was keen to continue engaging with the community and that options would be explored for another Officer to attend this Panel;
- (ix) how many fires at meal times were caused by alcohol misuse and the Area Manager advised that a different trend was starting to emerge and that, as the population now had a higher percentage of elderly people, more fires were at the homes of elderly people as opposed to people under the influence of alcohol;
- (x) whether a report could be provided to a future meeting of this Panel on the recent death caused by a fire at a property in South Ayrshire outlining whether this was a Council property, whether the person was in receipt of a care package and whether the fire engines were deployed timeously, etc. and the Area Manager advised that due to this matter being sub-judice and subject to data protection, he could not provide further information at present, however, this matter would be investigated to identify if lessons could be learned from this tragedy;
- (xi) educating people on the dangers related to accidental fires and the Area Manager advised that areas with prevalent activity could be identified and Fire Officers would engage with the community; that large events like Ayr Flower Show were used to issue information and engage with the public; local newspapers and local radio were also used to push key safety measures; and that, in working in partnership with other organisations, vulnerable individuals could be identified and visited by Fire Officers to offer advice on fire safety;
- (xii) the reduced number of electrical fires and whether this could be attributed to the Council carrying out free electric blanket tests and the Area Manager advised that, due to the introduction of duvets and 'onesies', properties having improved heating systems, and the high cost of purchasing electric blankets, fewer people were using them and this could be a reason for the reduced number of electrical fires;
- (xiii) whether electrical fires were caused by faulty appliances or circuits being overloaded, how these could be prevented, whether the Fire Service was carrying out early intervention and how the Fire Service was working with other partnerships and the Group Manager advised that a trend in the cause of fires would be identified and whether it was Scotland wide was established and the information was used to educate householders on the risks within the home and the Area Manager further advised that certain products had been identified as being the cause of fires and the manufacturers had been contacted, however, some householders purchased foreign products such as mobile phone chargers which did not have the same level of checks for safety and they were attempting to educate householders on the dangers of these products along with e-cigarettes which should not be left unattended whilst charging; and

- (xiv) whether the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service would be promoting the use of sprinkler systems, as this Council had invested a significant amount of money in installing sprinkler systems in Council properties and the Area Manager advised that he had recently attended a sprinkler seminar run by the British Sprinkler Association which was attended by members of the fire sector and the building sector and that, although expensive, the benefits of installing sprinkler systems were quickly evident and the benefits outweighed the costs.

The Chair, on behalf of the Panel thanked the Area Manager and Group Manager for providing background to the Performance Report and for giving the Panel an understanding of the statistics within the report.

Provost and Councillor Galbraith joined the meeting during consideration of the above item.

7. Overview on Police Scrutiny Arrangements.

Gordon Yates, a member of the Scottish Police Authority (SPA), gave a presentation to the Panel on the work of the SPA outlining

- the governance structures;
- the structure of the SPA;
- the structure of Police Scotland;
- the progress made to date by the SPA;
- the challenges faced by the SPA and how they would overcome these;
- the SPA's partners in scrutiny; and
- what the SPA stood for.

Mr. Yates further advised

- (1) that the SPA had been established on 1st April 2013 and it worked in partnership with Local Authorities and other partners;
- (2) that the Board consisted of twelve members who were appointed in October 2012 and were responsible for ensuring that the Board met its obligations, to deliver scrutiny and governance and to ensure that the Chief Constable was held to account;
- (3) that the Board met a minimum of six times per year but had met twelve times last year; that the meetings were open to the public, wheelchair accessible, had Twitter feeds throughout the meeting, had a live broadcast on the Board's website and all minutes were published on the Board website; and
- (4) that Police Scotland required to make savings of £1.1b by 2026 which would be governed by the Board.

Questions were then asked by Panel Members in relation to:

- (a) whether Police Officers were frustrated and down heartened having caught perpetrators, these offenders were then given a light sentence in court and released early and Mr. Yates advised that this did cause frustration amongst Police Officers, however, the Officers were professional and divorced themselves from the process and allowed the Court officials to carry out their duties;

- (b) whether Police Scotland had the 17,234 officers which was the minimum number that the Scottish Government outlined that Police Scotland should employ and Mr. Yates advised that Police Scotland currently had more than the minimum number of officers in employment;
- (c) the non-attendance of Police Officers at Community Council meetings and, therefore, a lack of engagement with the public and Mr. Yates advised that other Local Authorities had also expressed concerns regarding this and that this was challenging, however, it was for Police Scotland to prioritise their workload;
- (d) the Board's decision not to prohibit Officers carrying firearms on routine call-outs which led to the Chief Constable being under pressure from the media and Mr. Yates advised that operational policies were the Chief Constable's responsibility, that the SPA did not have sight of the policy until after a view had been taken by the Chief Constable and that the Board had now discussed the matter with the Chief Constable and had advised that, should a policy have an impact on the public, the Board should be asked for its view on this;
- (e) the country being under threat of terrorist attacks and Police Scotland requiring to make savings of £1.1b by 2026 and how would this be balanced up and Mr. Yates advised that the SPA was very well briefed on potential terrorist attacks and the Board had been assured that Police Specialist Teams were well aware of threat levels and were prepared to respond to challenges if they arose; and
- (f) how the Board Members were appointed and Mr. Yates advised that these were public appointments with the Members being appointed for a four year term.

The Chair, on behalf of the Panel thanked Mr. Yates for his interesting and informative presentation.

8. Progress Against Police Plan.

There was submitted a report (issued) of 13th November 2014 ([link attached](#)) by the Head of Communities outlining the progress against the Local Police Plan and requesting that Panel Members identify any concerns for consideration by Police colleagues.

Superintendent Kerr and Chief Inspector Taylor of Police Scotland then took the Panel through the Performance Report for 1st April to 30th September 2014 outlining statistics and highlighting the priorities identified and those areas being monitored.

Questions were then asked by Panel Members in relation to:

- (a) why Police Scotland could not seize property under the Proceeds of Crime Act, where unauthorised planning developments had taken place, as occurred in certain Local Authorities in England and Superintendent Kerr advised that his officers could liaise with the appropriate Council Officers on this matter and report back to a future meeting of this Panel;
- (b) what happened to the monies made from the Proceeds of Crime Act and the Head of Communities advised that the Scottish Government had created a fund for projects to submit bids to ensure that the money was used for the good of the public;

- (c) whether a breakdown could be provided on the people killed or seriously injured on the roads providing their ages, whether they were driving the car which crashed, etc. and Superintendent Kerr advised that this information could be provided;
- (d) whether there were upward trends in the use of mobile phones, drink driving, dangerous driving, etc. and, if there were, what were the causes and how were Police Scotland tackling this and Superintendent Kerr advised that the main focus was stopping vehicles to provide advice, issue warnings and attempt to educate motorists and Chief Inspector Taylor further advised that there was a decrease in the use of handheld mobile phones whilst driving due to more motorists having Bluetooth technology within their vehicles;
- (e) whether the new legislation regarding road tax assisted Police Officers in their duties and Chief Inspector Taylor advised that it was very helpful to have all information on motorists readily available;
- (f) whether there was a marked difference in the number of assaults over the festive period and Chief Inspector Taylor advised that this was the busiest time of the year for Police Officers due to the night time economy in South Ayrshire and the party nights in the run up to Christmas;
- (g) whether the use of CCTV footage assisted Police Officers in catching perpetrators of crimes and Superintendent Kerr advised that CCTV footage was very helpful in identifying criminals; and
- (h) how Police Scotland was tackling cyber-bullying and Superintendent Kerr advised that Officers obtained information from google and from sites such as Facebook and could piece information together to catch those responsible for cyber-bullying.

Comments were made by Members of the Panel in relation to the difficulty in assessing trends without the background information to the statistics; the importance of a partnership approach to working; and the wish to see how community policing was performing.

Decided:

- (i) to request that Police Scotland liaise with the Planning Manager on unauthorised planning developments;
- (ii) to request that Police Scotland provide more in-depth data to a future meeting of this Panel; and
- (iii) to thank Superintendent Kerr and Chief Inspector Taylor for providing background to the Performance Report which had been very helpful.

The meeting ended at 1.00 p.m.