

MINUTE
of
CABINET
(POLICE & FIRE)

Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 16 September 2021.

Present:

Councillor Colm Merrick (Chair)
Councillor Caroline Bamforth

Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)
Councillor Barbara Grant

Councillor Merrick in the Chair

Attending:

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Caroline Innes, Deputy Chief Executive; Murray Husband, Head of Digital and Community Safety; Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Strategic Services); Stephen Bell, Community Safety Manager; David Baird, Principal Officer, Asset & Property Management; Sharon McIntyre, Committee Services Officer and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Chief Superintendent Mark Sutherland (Divisional Commander) and Chief Inspector Alan Gray (Area Commander), Police Scotland; Area Commander David McCarrey and Group Commander Alan Coughtrie Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Apologies:

Councillors Danny Devlin, Alan Lafferty and Gordon Wallace.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1754. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

POLICE SCOTLAND – PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2021/22

1755. The Cabinet considered a report by the Divisional Commander, Police Scotland, providing details of the performance of the police over the first quarter of 2021/22. The report also provided statistical information in relation to various categories of crimes and offences committed during the reported period together with comparative statistics for the corresponding period in 2021/22.

Chief Superintendent Sutherland provided an overview of the East Renfrewshire Policing Plan 2020-23 during quarter one. He noted the difficulty of the interpretation of the statistics with previous years given the impact of the COVID-19 restrictions in place during this period and therefore advised that greater context around the statistics had been provided.

He informed Elected Members of the expected impact of day to day police resources during the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow from 31 October to 12 November 2021. A suitable and sustainable community policing model would be implemented to support the residents of East Renfrewshire during this period although he highlighted that this would be a challenging time for the police service.

It was reported that a briefing took place with senior health care professionals in East Renfrewshire and the police on the 24 August which focussed on the public health approach to policing. An outcome from the meeting was for an alcohol related matters workshop to be held which would include as a topic police referrals to other services to provide suitable support. It was intended that an update on the public health approach for policing in East Renfrewshire would be brought to a future Cabinet meeting. A full time appointment in the public health approach to policing had been made and partnership working with Public Health Scotland continued.

It was further reported that a dedicated economic crime unit had been established, focussing on the increase in fraud whilst providing specialist support, guidance and expertise to all police officers. Furthermore, over the summer period a meeting took place at the Glasgow Climbing Centre with campus officers and young people involved in diversity work. Reference was also made to the forthcoming Playground Festival in Rouken Glen Park.

Chief Inspector Gray then reported on the performance of the police against the five local policing priorities contained in the East Renfrewshire Policing Plan 2020-23. He outlined the changing timeline of the wider COVID-19 restrictions during this period and the impact this had on the delivery of local operational policing services and crime profiles.

He advised that acquisitive crimes were lower than for the same period the previous year and lower for the five-year average. A slight increase in the number of homes broken into, inclusive of attempted break-ins, took place with fourteen crimes recorded during quarter one which was a rise of five compared to the same period in 2020. It was noted that this was not unexpected given the significant COVID restrictions that were in place during the same period the preceding year, and was down 45% compared to the five-year average. Crime prevention survey visits and social media messaging were being used to alert the public to any emerging trends and to provide guidance with regard to home and vehicle security.

Fraud had increased significantly both locally in East Renfrewshire and across the United Kingdom, with there being an increase in Quarter 1 compared to the same period in 2020 and also in the five-year average. Action plans were in place for bogus worker activity and no significant increasing trend had been seen for this crime. The local police Twitter account had been used to provide guidance in this area.

Chief Inspector Gray advised that in relation to public protection, an update report had been provided to Councillor Bamforth following her request at the previous meeting. Online sexual crimes against children under sixteen years of age was at 29% in East Renfrewshire whilst 33% in the rest of Scotland. This remained an area of focus with parental guidance provided through social media campaigns. The decrease in 2020 for sexual offences was more in line with the previous five-year average. During this period, in separate and unrelated incidents, four warrants had been executed by officers in relation to possession of indecent images of children. Four separate males with ages ranging from 17 to 56 had been reported to the Procurator Fiscal in relation to alleged offences.

Slightly fewer domestic abuse incidents were attended compared to the same period the previous year, although this was slightly more than the five-year average. Year to date domestic abuse incidents, where associated crimes had been recorded, reduced by over a third in comparison to the same period the previous year. During this period local officers were trained as domestic abuse champions.

In relation to the detection of drug supply offences, it was advised that there had been an increase, with twelve crimes recorded in East Renfrewshire. This was above the five-year average figure of 9.8 crimes recorded in Quarter 1.

In relation to violent crime, in the first quarter of this year three fewer serious assaults and twenty four fewer minor assaults had been recorded compared to the same period the previous year. These represented reductions of 33% and 20% respectively and figures remained well below the five-year average statistics. Although not normally reported, there had been a slight increase in the assaults on emergency service workers. Two robberies were reported, with a 26 year old male being reported to the Procurator Fiscal for one of these offences whilst enquiries into the other crime were ongoing.

In comparison to the previous year there was a reduction in the reporting of anti-social behaviour which could be linked to the relaxing of Covid-19 restrictions. Antisocial behaviour and disorder, including youth disorder, was addressed through dedicated action plans with partners and support from additional specialist policing resources, including off-road motorcyclists, Mounted Officers and the Air Support Unit who used their Unmanned Aerial System to assist in identifying groups and facilitate safe and effective engagement with officers.

Chief Inspector Gray then reported on the incidents referred to in the report under the areas of violent crime, crimes of dishonesty, vulnerable road users, domestic abuse, adult protection and child protection and young people.

There followed a short question and answer session in the course of which Chief Superintendent Sutherland and Chief Inspector Gray responded to a number of questions and provided clarification on a range of operational issues within East Renfrewshire and the crime statistics recorded in the report.

The terms of the report were noted.

SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (SFRS) PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2021/22

1756. The Cabinet considered a report by the Area Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), providing details of the performance of SFRS in East Renfrewshire during the first quarter of 2021/22.

Area Commander David McCarrey introduced himself to the Cabinet and provided an update that the SFRS would have dedicated resources during the period of COP26 and therefore business as usual would not be affected. However senior members of the SFRS would be called upon therefore availability may be restricted over this period.

An analysis of the incidents identified in the six areas for demand reduction that had taken place in each of the Council's five wards during the reported period was outlined in the report.

Referring to the report, Group Commander Coughtrie provided an overview of the activity during the reported period. There had been a 21% decrease in accidental dwelling fires, ten out of the eleven properties had working detection and nearly 50% were extinguished prior to the arrival of the fire service with the remaining 50% requiring limited action by the fire service on arrival. These fires were limited to the room of origin and to the item first ignited which resulted in limited or no fire damage. Targeted leaflet drops continue in the areas where there have been one or more accidental dwelling fires.

No accidental dwelling fire casualties had occurred during quarter one, a 100% reduction from the same period the previous year and a 40% reduction on the three-year average. Operational crews carried out 45 high risk home fire safety visits.

In terms of unintentional injury and harm, there had been a significant increase on the same period the preceding year, with an 8% increase on the three-year average. The number of casualties showed an increase as a result of eight road traffic collision incidents with five extrications within the reporting period. There were no fatalities, two injuries required hospitalisation and all other casualties had minor injuries.

It was noted that during this period crews and the Community Action Team carried out twenty four multi-agency engagement activities across East Renfrewshire with a focus on road traffic collisions, unintentional injury and harm within the home, and water related injuries. During the extended period of good weather there were no water related incidents or casualties. Familiarisation visits to reservoirs and dams were carried out and response plans implemented to prepare for future periods of good weather. Social media campaigns 'Stay Alive' and 'Get to know the fatal five' focussed on the dangers of drink and drug driving, speeding, careless and inconsiderate driving and using a hand held mobile phone highlighting the risks of these activities to the lives of others.

He reported that there had been a significant increase in deliberate fire setting, both on the year on year and three-year average although this could be attributed to a spate of secondary fires during June in one specific area which contributed to over 50% of the recorded activity. The Community Action Team and Fire Safety Enforcement Team consequently provided advice in this area resulting in a reduction in this figure.

It was reported that there had been a 100% increase in non-domestic fires in relation to the previous reporting period. However this was measured against an unusually low figure of three incidents last year and six this year, with three being private properties and three falling under the fire Scotland Act for relevant premises. No deliberate fires were recorded within these figures therefore resulting fires were accidental or a fault within the premise.

Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals had increased by 84% during the quarter, with a reduction of 8% over the three-year average. The significant increase was caused predominantly by actuations at schools, due to apparatus being contaminated with dust in the detector heads from the schools being closed and limited ventilation within the premises. The Take 5 campaign continued to be used in this area, with no further instances of reoccurrence following this being implemented.

Following questions, Group Commander Coughtrie provided an update on the fire alarm regulations due to come into effect in February 2022, advising that all domestic premises would need to have one smoke alarm in the room most frequently used for general living purposes, one in circulation spaces, one heat alarm in every kitchen and a carbon monoxide detector where there was a carbon-fuelled appliance. Area Commander McCarrey advised that Care and Repair would be carrying out installations in East Renfrewshire and the SFRS would be able to carry out high risk installations.

There followed further questions in the course of which Group Commander Coughtrie and Area Commander McCarrey provided clarification on a range of operational issues within East Renfrewshire and the statistics recorded in the report.

The report was noted.

SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (SFRS) – PRESENTATION ON UNWANTED FIRE ALARM SIGNALS

1757. A presentation was made by Area Commander McCarrey on unwanted fire alarm signals (UFAS), the presentation outlined the case for change inclusive of the impact of UFAS on the SFRS and communities. Area Commander McCarrey outlined the three options detailed in the current public consultation, inclusive of the benefits and risks associated with each of these options.

It was confirmed that arrangements would be made for a consultation response to be submitted on the SFRS Reducing Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals consultation.

The presentation was noted.

CHAIR

