

MINUTE
of
CABINET
(POLICE & FIRE)

Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 17 February 2022.

Present:

Councillor Colm Merrick (Chair)
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)

Caroline Bamforth
Councillor Barbara Grant

Councillor Merrick in the Chair

Attending:

Lorraine McMillan, Chief Executive; Louise Pringle, Director of Business Operations and Partnerships; Stephen Bell, Community Safety Manager; Sharon McIntyre, Committee Services Officer and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending:

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

Apologies:

Councillors Betty Cunningham, Danny Devlin, Alan Lafferty, Gordon Wallace and Area Commander David McCarrey.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1888. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

POLICE SCOTLAND – PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE THIRD QUARTER OF 2021-22

1889. The Cabinet considered a report by the Divisional Commander, Police Scotland, providing details of the performance of the police over the third 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. He initially thanked the broader community planning partnership across East Renfrewshire for taking some of the summer learnings into winter.

Chief Superintendent Sutherland provided an overview of the East Renfrewshire Policing Plan 2020-23 during quarter three and noted the impact of the Omicron variant towards the latter stages of this period. He advised this was twofold, firstly in terms of the operational challenge with an impact on resourcing. Secondly there continued to be an influence on policing statistics and managing information which in turn affected scrutiny and management decisions based on the statistics. An example of this was the range in the reporting of anti-social behaviour during lockdown in comparison to when there were no restrictions and when legislation was placed in comparison to when no legislation was in place.

He advised that the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow was seen to be successful in terms of preparation and delivery, whilst effective policing and service delivery across East Renfrewshire, East Dunbartonshire and Greater Glasgow was maintained. He provided thanks to partners and police staff over this period.

He outlined that from a broader strategic perspective across Greater Glasgow, a focus continued on public health delivery. A public health coordinator had been appointed and was further developing the relationship with Public Health Scotland. It was noted that local approaches to public health and delivery were underway rolling out work in Greater Glasgow to East Renfrewshire and East Dunbartonshire with a focus on mental health, drugs and more recently poverty.

He noted that there had been a reduction in sexual crime in East Renfrewshire unlike in Greater Glasgow and nationally; and whilst this figure appeared to be positive the police were aiming to ensure that appropriate mechanisms were in place for victims of sexual crime to have the confidence and the opportunity to come forward.

He advised that whilst the acquisitive crime figure for East Renfrewshire was positive against the five-year average, this was an area being closely monitored across Greater Glasgow, in particular for house break-ins. He outlined that as a result he had doubled the acquisitive crime team in the division.

He thanked Elected Members for their scrutiny as committee members of Cabinet (Police and Fire) and the wider elected membership of East Renfrewshire in advance of the May elections.

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 impact of the Omicron variant in this quarter, which resulted in the greatest number of police officer absences locally during the pandemic to date as a result of the transmissibility of the variant. He noted the vast majority of these absences were not due to work related contacts as a result of the control mitigation measures in place. These absences provided operational challenges locally, and indeed across the whole force. He advised that absence levels had returned to normal although the small number of officers absent with long COVID were being supported.

He advised that the restrictions on large scale events as a result of the Omicron variant did not provide a local impact in East Renfrewshire and there was no increase in anti-social behaviour during this period. He advised that this was not unsurprising given there were no restrictions on domestic gatherings.

He provided thanks to now temporary Superintendent Barbour who addressed matters with Council colleagues while he was in attendance at COP 26 and noted the maintenance of effective policing and service delivery within East Renfrewshire.

On referring to the report, Chief Inspector Gray advised that in relation to public protection, 68 sexual crimes had been recorded, 17 fewer than for the same period last year and over 23% lower than the five-year average figure of 88.8%. He advised that work was ongoing to ensure accessibility for reporting and noted the work of the 'Don't be that guy' campaign which was launched in October.

In relation to domestic abuse incidents, the number of incidents to date remained relatively static compared to the same period the previous year and also in comparison to the five-year average. Robust daily scrutiny was provided with additional support provided by Domestic Abuse Investigation Unit colleagues. Locally low levels of violence continued, with a far greater number of reports relating to non-criminal activity. Early intervention and de-escalation of disputes in these circumstances was welcomed. He highlighted the work of the disclosure scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland to allow individuals access to police information on the history of domestic abuse for an individual who was their partner.

In relation to violent crime, in the third quarter of the year serious assaults had remained virtually static compared to the same period the previous year and 7.4% below the previous five-year average. Minor assaults had increased by 11%, these figures were in line with previous five-year average data.

Assaults on emergency service workers had increased and doubled to 44 in East Renfrewshire. Previous five-year average data was not available locally for this crime type. Data analysis highlighted that this increase was part of a wider increase across the Greater Glasgow division and beyond. Whilst this may be due to an increase in recording and reporting, the well-being of Police Officers continued to be supported. Locally in quarter three, these incidents had been minor assaults with no weapons used. Two further minor assaults this year were on Scottish Ambulance service colleagues.

Robberies had remained low to the end of quarter three, with a total of four reported. This was three fewer than the same period the previous year and five fewer than the five-year average.

In relation to the detection of drug supply offences, it was advised that a total of 23 drug supply offences had been recorded this year. This was six more than the same period the previous year and consistent with the five-year average. The year to date number of offences recorded relating to possession of drugs was down 31%. Given broadly similar trends throughout the majority of policing subdivisions across Greater Glasgow division, it was believed that the impacts of the COVID response may be a factor. Officers were being encouraged to proactively police and carry out stop and search activity where legislative requirements were met and ensure this activity was appropriately recorded. It was noted that a public health approach to policing continued to be followed in this area. Colleagues were being supported with the Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) due to deliver training in quarter one of the 2022-23 financial year.

Chief Inspector Gray advised that acquisitive crimes showed an increase in domestic house break-ins compared to 2020, although this represented a decrease on the previous five-year average. He then outlined that work continued with divisional and organisation wide colleagues to identify perpetrators who worked across policing and local authority boundaries. Where appropriate, residents in effected areas had been contacted through leaflet drops and social media messaging, encouraging their vigilance and adoption of appropriate security advice. Specialist departments such as roads policing and dog branches had been used to increase visibility in areas targeted, and additionally, plain clothes patrols and electric vehicles had also been used. Examples of crimes which had taken place in the local area under this crime type were provided.

In terms of antisocial behaviour and disorder, the impact of the pandemic and in particular the impact of lockdown and restrictions on social gatherings and mobility changed the normally consistent seasonal graphs recorded in East Renfrewshire. In quarter three, there continued to be a significant reduction in overall calls related to antisocial behaviour compared to the same period the previous year and a return to more seasonal trends. Calls classified as public nuisance were down by 43% on 2020 data and also down on the five-year average data. Noise complaints were down by 14% on 2020 data and broadly in line with five-year average data. Neighbour disputes were down by 12% compared to 2020/21 data, although figures had shown an increase in comparison to the previous five-year average. Partnership working continued through the weekly Greater Results In Partnership (GRIP) meeting.

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.

It was agreed that arrangements were to be made for Police representation or reports to be provided at Community Council meetings in East Renfrewshire.

The terms of the report were noted.

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

1890. The Cabinet considered a report by the Group Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), providing details of the performance of SFRS in East Renfrewshire during the third quarter of 2021-22.

Group Commander Coughtrie advised that as a service they were continuing to adjust to meet with the ongoing challenges of the COVID pandemic, positively progressing with their recovery strategy and implementing business as usual where possible to keep the property and fleet portfolio COVID secure.

He noted that the SFRS long term vision document was now available on the organisation's website. The mission remained the same: Working Together for a Safer Scotland. The vision would shape the three Strategic Plans over the next decade starting with 2022-25. The key purpose of preserving life would remain at the core of the SFRS although there would also be a focus towards local needs and working with communities to address them.

Group Commander Coughtrie advised that during this period crews and the Community Action Team carried out seventeen multi-agency engagement activities across East Renfrewshire. Operational crews had carried out 261 home fire safety visits, with 125 of these being high risk visits. Post domestic incident responses carried out were 67, with 57 home fire safety visits resulting from the post domestic incident responses. Smoke detectors fitted were 304 of the linked system and 186 stand-alone alarms. For heat detectors, 117 linked heat detectors as well as 51 stand-alone heat detectors were fitted as well as 53 carbon monoxide detectors.

Referring to the report, Group Commander Coughtrie provided an overview of the activity during the reported period. For accidental dwelling fires, there was an increase in the year

on year indicator of 22%, which represented an increase of two accidental dwelling fires for this reporting period. Overall there was a reduction of 13% against the three-year indicator. Cooking was again the main contributor, accounting for over 60% of activity. However, it was positive to note that detection was present in 82% of the premises. This highlighted an increase in public awareness regarding the importance of the installation and maintenance of fire detection within the home, and an overview of the public campaigns run were provided.

In terms of accidental dwelling casualties there had been no increase in either the year on year or three-year average indicators, with the total remaining extremely low. He noted in this period East Renfrewshire fire crews gained a minimum of one home fire safety visit following on from each post domestic incident response, the highest attainment rate of this type of activity across Scotland.

In terms of unintentional injury and harm, year on year there had been an increase of 20% in special service casualties, which equated to an additional one casualty. A significant reduction of 52% on the three-year indicator. It was also positive to note that 83% of unknown fire casualties received only slight injuries and were transported to hospital as a precautionary measure. One fatality was recorded during this reporting period which was related to assisting partner agencies gaining access to a premises. A total of eight road traffic collisions had occurred, which all resulted in minor injuries with three casualties involved. No water related incidents or casualties took place. Social media campaigns 'Stay Alive' and 'Get to know the fatal five' continued, focussing 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 reduction in deliberate fire setting, both on the year on year and three-year average. The majority being secondary fires from domestic wheelie bins. The Community Action team continued to engage with the East Renfrewshire's Young Person Diversionary Group to educate young people within our communities on the consequences of fire related antisocial behaviour. The fire safety enforcement team continued to engage with duty holders to remind them of their responsibilities to remove any potential sources of ignition, to minimise the risk of fire within local businesses. The Community Action team and local crews continued to engage with partners and public across Barrhead, Liboside and Uplawmoor, which accounted for ten of the incidents occurring during this reporting period. The majority of incidents included grassland or refuse containers predominantly over the weekend period, with 50% occurring over the October week. The other incidents in this category were one private shed and two private cars.

It was reported that there had been an increase in non-domestic fires in relation to the previous reporting period, however this was based on very low figures, with three recorded in the same period last year and a total of five recorded in the period this year. It was noted that there had been no increase in this type of instance against the three-year indicator and the three incidents resulted in no fire damage. Further information was then provided on the three accidental fires and two deliberate fires.

Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS) continued to increase, 32% of these were in educational facilities and 13% within a care establishment with the cause predominantly accidental. Challenges still continued in reducing unwanted fire alarm signals despite ongoing initiatives, direct engagement and education directed towards duty holders. The change to the UFAS policy however now means that one vehicle was now sent to respond reducing blue light journeys and associated costs.

On 10 January 2022 SFRS published a UFAS consultation update highlighting that there were over 28,000 false alarms every year, leading to 57,000 unnecessary blue light journeys. Following the twelve week public consultation, which provided communities and

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partners with three options to safely reduce these numbers, it was identified that most stakeholders supported option A. This option means that SFRS will establish if there is a fire present before sending appliances. Hospitals, care homes and premises with sleeping risk remain exempt and appliances will continue to be mobilised automatically to any fire alarm actuations within these facilities. The change will reduce attendance rates by up to 57% and this will come into effect in April 2023 and will bring SFRS into line with most of the other UK Fire and Rescue services.

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

The report was noted.

CHAIR