

Minute of Meeting

Police and Fire and Rescue Board
Monday 29 January 2024
Item No 4.1



Police and Fire and Rescue Board

Date	Time	Venue
Wednesday 15 November 2023	11.00am	Council Chambers/Hybrid

Present:

Councillor McKenzie (Chair)
Councillor Alexander
Councillor Curran (Attended virtually)
Councillor McEwan
Councillor Smail
Councillor Pottinger (Attended virtually)
Councillor McCall (Attended virtually)
Councillor Cassidy (entered 11.30, left 11.54)

In Attendance:

Midlothian Council	Derek Oliver, Chief Officer Place
	Lucy Roddie, Democratic Services Officer
	Hannah Forbes, Assistant Democratic Services Officer
Police Scotland	Alwyn Bell, Divisional Commander Chief Superintendent
	Jim Robertson, Chief Inspector
Scottish Fire and Rescue Service	Mark Landels, Group Commander

	Hilary Sangster, Area Commander
	Andrew Girrity, East of Scotland Head of Service Delivery

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

The Chair, Councillor McKenzie, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Police and Fire and Rescue Board, advising that this meeting was open to the public and would be webcast live.

Apologies for absence were received from David Morrison, Station Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

2. Order of Business

The order of business was as set out in the Agenda previously circulated.

3. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were intimated at this stage of the proceedings.

4. Minute of Previous Meeting

The Minute of the Meeting held on 21 August 2023 was submitted. It was noted that the wrong date was recorded for the date of the next meeting, and this will be amended.

Councillor McEwan commented that he had requested that blue light incidents in relation to Schools be included in future reports from Police Scotland, but this had not been detailed in the Minute. Jim Robertson, Chief Inspector, confirmed this had been taken as an action.

The Minute of 21 August 2023 was approved as a correct record, subject to the amendment as detailed above. Moved by Councillor Smaill, seconded by Councillor McEwan.

5. Public Reports

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.1	Introduction from Andrew Girrity, East of Scotland Head of Service Delivery	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Outline of report and summary of discussion		
<p>Andrew Girrity took the opportunity to give an introduction to the Board in his capacity as the new East of Scotland Head of Service Delivery. Andrew Girrity reiterated the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's commitment to delivering first class service to Midlothian and highlighted the success of partnership working. Andrew Girrity noted that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's significant funding gap presented challenges. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (hereafter the Service) is taking a risk-based approach and ensuring resources are targeted appropriately.</p> <p>Andrew Girrity gave an update on plans to rebuild Dalkeith community fire station on or near the existing site, which had been allocated budget in the Service's</p>		

capital plan. Andrew Girrity reported on other Service priorities including investment in training and equipment, with over £10 million invested in the fleet in the last year and a half.

The Chair gave thanks to Andrew for the introduction and invited questions and comments from the Board.

Councillor McEwan extended his congratulations to the Service for their great work. He asked if the Service had any intention of expanding capacity via increasing fleet vehicles or constructing an additional fire station in the context of rapid population growth in Midlothian.

In response, Andrew Girrity commented that the Service had a detailed picture of community risk and current resource provision is assessed as appropriate, highlighting the strong performance of the Service in Midlothian. Andrew Girrity noted the challenges of adding stations in the current financial climate. Andrew Girrity commented that a growing population does not necessarily equate to increased risk, noting that new-build dwellings tend to be safer due to requirements to adhere to certain safety standards.

Councillor Alexander noted the importance of education in fire prevention and asked if the Service conducted outreach activities in educational settings. In response, Andrew Girrity confirmed that education and early intervention are considered key for prevention. The Service works collaboratively with Police Scotland and other relevant partners to mitigate antisocial behaviour, with dedicated resource available via community action teams.

Councillor Smaill noted that new heat and smoke alarms are now mandatory in domestic properties, with associated installation costs for homeowners. Councillor Smaill asked if the Service expected to see benefits, and whether there may be an increase in false alarms due to improved systems. In response, Andrew Girrity commented that the new alarms are considered a positive measure and will give early warning to occupiers, and the Service hopes to see decrease in fire fatalities as a result. Andrew Girrity commented that it may be possible that false alarms increase at first, but the Service expects this to level out as the new systems are embedded.

The Chair gave thanks to Andrew Girrity for the introduction.

Decision

The Board noted the update.

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.2	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Operational Changes 2023-24	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS)
Outline of report and summary of discussion		
Hilary Sangster, Area Commander, introduced the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Operational Changes 2023-24 report. Hilary Sangster noted the financial pressures facing the service.		

In response to a question from Councillor McEwan, Hilary Sangster confirmed that dynamic support was in place between neighbouring services to ensure operational cover.

The Chair noted that individual stations may have access to specialised appliances and asked if individual stations support each other. Hilary Sangster confirmed that stations tend to specialise in certain areas and the intention is to maximise flexibility and work collaboratively.

The Chair thanked Hilary Sangster for the report.

Decision

The Board noted the contents of the report.

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.3	Local Fire Plan Review and Development	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS)
Outline of report and summary of discussion		
Hilary Sangster reported that the Local Fire Plan Review and Development would be published following Service approval and thereafter circulated to the Police Fire and Rescue Board.		
Decision		
The Board noted the update.		

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.4	Protective Services Visual Q2	Derek Oliver, Chief Officer Place
Outline of report and summary of discussion		
Derek Oliver, Chief Officer Place, introduced the Protective Services Visual Q2 report and provided an update on the Protective Services functions which overlapped activities carried out by the Police and Fire and Rescue Services, highlighting the work which had been undertaken during the course of Quarter 2.		
The Chair thanked Derek Oliver for the report and opened it up to questions.		
Councillor Smaill referenced the new approach to the enforcement of littering and asked if improvements were being noticed. Derek Oliver responded that behavioural change is apparent and a fuller report would be presented to the Business Transformation Steering Group.		
Councillor Curran asked if there was any update regarding the antisocial behaviour at Sheriffhall Park and Ride. Derek Oliver reported that cross-service initiatives were ongoing. Jim Robertson, Chief Inspector, further commented that the Community Action team were conducting regular patrols. In a joint initiative		

between the Council and Police Scotland, surveillance cameras had been installed and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) systems are in use.

Councillor Alexander asked if Midlothian Council were considering introducing fines for on-pavement parking. Derek Oliver responded that new legislation was available for Local Authorities in relation to this and a full paper would be brought to a future meeting of Midlothian Council for consideration. Derek Oliver highlighted that displaced parking would be an issue if the Council decided to introduce fines for on-pavement parking.

Councillor McEwan asked who was responsible for prosecuting on-pavement parking. Derek Oliver drew the distinction between parking on the pavement and driving on the pavement. The Local Authority would be responsible for prosecuting parking on pavement, and Police Scotland for driving on the pavement.

Decision

The Board noted the contents of the report.

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.5	Police Scotland Midlothian Scrutiny Q2	Police Scotland
Outline of report and summary of discussion		
<p>Alwyn Bell, Divisional Commander Chief Superintendent, introduced the Police Scotland Midlothian Scrutiny Q2 report. Alwyn Bell noted that Police Scotland were facing a real-term funding cut, with a projected overspend of £19 million across the service.</p> <p>Alwyn Bell reported that the current officer population stands at 16,600 with no further recruitment planned for 2023. As of Monday 19 October, Jo Farrell had taken up the position of Chief Constable.</p> <p>Elected Members are encouraged to attend the regional scrutiny engagement session in November.</p> <p>Alwyn Bell spoke about the service's operational focus on threat, harm and risk. Alwyn Bell reported an increase in housebreaking and car theft in Midlothian. A task force has been established in response with a number of specialist roles and enforcement activity planned.</p> <p>Alwyn Bell reported that 2 individuals had been charged in connection with the production and supply of illicit diazepam in the Danderhall area. The seized drugs had an estimated street value in excess of £1 million.</p> <p>Jim Robertson, Chief Inspector, highlighted the success of working in partnership with Police Scotland, Midlothian Council, SFRS and community groups.</p> <p>Councillor McEwan gave his compliments to Police Scotland for their excellent work. Councillor McEwan expressed his concern that officer recruitment had been paused in the context of rapid population growth in Midlothian. In response, Alwyn Bell noted that Police Scotland recognises that the funding gap should not be</p>		

bridged by reducing officer numbers and Police Scotland were working hard to ensure the service is aligned to future demands.

In response to Councillor McEwan's query about how officer numbers are determined, Alwyn Bell reported that a range of factors were taken into consideration, including demand and crime types. Alwyn Bell reported that regional and national support was available from specialist divisions on an ongoing basis.

Councillor Alexander asked if crime had evolved with the availability of new technologies and the changing demographic of Midlothian, and if policing approaches had adapted in response. Jim Robertson noted the continually evolving nature of crime and reported that, overall, Police Scotland had seen an increase in cyber crime and fraud. Police Scotland works in collaboration with partners to adapt as necessary. Alwyn Bell spoke about the regionalisation of crime patterns. Police Scotland has established the East Fraud Hub to pool resources, promote best practice and prevent the duplication of effort. Regional services meet regularly in recognition of the cross-boundary nature of criminal activity.

Councillor Smaill asked about Police Scotland attendance at community council meetings. Jim Robertson reported that Police Scotland attend community council meetings on a quarterly basis and would submit a written report in the absence of an officer.

Councillor Smaill noted that a defibrillator in Bilston had recently been vandalised and wondered if policing activities were integrated with lower levels of digital output such as dashcams and doorbell camera footage. In response, Jim Robertson reported that Police Scotland had seen an increase in the availability of dashcam and doorbell camera footage and made use of this where required.

Councillor Curran asked if there was any reason for the reported decrease in bail curfew checks. Jim Robertson responded that the completion of bail curfew checks was linked to operational demand and cited the higher rate of attrition over the summer period due to annual leave.

The Chair asked if an increase in acquisitive crimes was to be expected in the context of the cost of living crisis. In response, Jim Robertson confirmed there had been an increase in acquisitive crimes and this could at least in part be attributed to the cost of living crisis.

The Chair noted the retrospective approach to community council involvement and asked if there was any scope to make this more proactive, for example, by raising awareness of seasonal crimes and associated preventative measures that members of the public could take. Jim Robertson confirmed this could be incorporated going forward.

Decision

The Board noted the contents of the report.

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.6	SFRS Q2 ML Performance Report	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS)
Outline of report and summary of discussion		
<p>Mark Landels, Group Commander, introduced the report. The report provides information on the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's prevention, protection and operational response activities within Midlothian for Quarter 2 of 2022-23 (1 July – 30 September 2022) including information on the year to date figures.</p> <p>Mark Landels then gave an update on activity around Bonfire night. Across the East Service Delivery area, crews had attended 90 bonfires. 4 attacks had been made on crews in the East of Scotland. Nationally, 15 attacks had been made over a 7 day period, with 9 attacks on 5 November. Mark Landels commended the joint working with Police Scotland and Local Authorities in preventative work and planning.</p> <p>Mark Landels gave an update on Home Fire Safety Visits, noting that 104 visits had been undertaken in the reporting period. This service is continually promoted and is considered a cornerstone in fire prevention. Mark Landels highlighted the success of multi-agency working in the context of safeguarding.</p> <p>Mark Landels highlighted the success of a recent initiative to engage with pupils not in mainstream schooling and noted the positive impact this had on one particular individual.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Mark Landels for the report and opened it up to questions.</p> <p>Councillor McEwan commended the work of the Place directorate within Penicuik, noting that the road network had been altered to ensure sufficient access for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.</p> <p>Councillor Smaill noted there had been an increase in deliberate fire raising, particularly in rural areas, and wondered if any measures were in place to address this. In response, Mark Landels reported that crews engage with individuals on arrival at incidents. Seasonal thematic action plans are in place, and the Service engages with young people in educational settings.</p> <p>Councillor Alexander enquired if the Service engaged with partnerships in relation to rural wilful fire raising. Mark Landels responded that he would take this matter away and provide a response offline.</p> <p>In response to a question from Councillor Smaill, Mark Landels reported that there had been no noticeable increase in deliberate fire raising for insurance purposes in the context of the cost of living crisis.</p> <p>The Chair concluded by giving thanks to both Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service on behalf of the communities throughout Midlothian.</p>		
Decision		
The Board noted the contents of the report.		

6. Private Reports

No private items for discussion

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held on Monday 29 January 2024 at 2.00pm.

The meeting terminated at 12.47 pm.