

Minute of Meeting



Police and Fire and Rescue Board

Date	Time	Venue
31 August 2020	11.00 am	Council Chambers, Midlothian House, Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith

Present:

Councillor Curran (Chair)	Councillor McCall
Councillor Muirhead	Councillor Parry

In attendance:

Midlothian Council Derek Oliver, Chief Officer Place	Verona MacDonald, Democratic Services Team Leader
Police Scotland Chief Superintendent John McKenzie	Chief Inspector Arron Clinkscales
Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Stephen Gourlay, Area Commander	Roy Bradley, Station Commander

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Munro and Smail.

2. Order of Business

The Chair advised the order of business was as per the agenda circulated.

3. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were intimated.

4. Minute of Previous Meeting

The Minute of Meeting of 17 February 2020 was unanimously approved and the Chair was authorised to sign it as a correct record.

5. Public Reports

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.1.1 and 5.1.2	Fire and Rescue Service – Scrutiny Report Quarter 4 2019 – 2020 and Scrutiny Report Quarter 1 2020 - 2021	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Outline of report and summary of discussion		
<p>Stephen Gourlay by way of an update advised of a few matters worthy of noting:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) He introduced Roy Bradley and advised he would cover the quarterly reports. He provided some information by way of Roy's background; (ii) Scottish pay deal offer was rejected by ballot which means now back into the national negotiations with a 2% offer this year; (iii) Unprecedented changes to business processes due to the pandemic which although challenging, did not affect the ability to provide an emergency response in Midlothian; (iv) He mentioned the sad news about the death of a young serving officer who died as a result of an accident; (v) Midlothian will be the subject of an inspection from HM Inspectorate which will take place over the next couple of months with the report being available in time for the next Board meeting if not the one thereafter. <p>Roy Bradley then spoke to the terms of the quarter 4 report for 2019-20 and the quarter 1 report for 2020-21. He highlighted 2 errors - Page 10 of the document pack, third paragraph, third sentence should read 18 not 16 and Page 15 of the document pack, second paragraph, second sentence should read 2 not 3 separate fire incidents.</p> <p>Councillor Parry wondered about the increase to 23 accidental dwelling fires in Midlothian West and whether there was a particular reason for this. Her question was answered by Mr Gourlay who advised that there was no particular pattern to residential fires and the figure does fluctuate. Whereas it has been difficult to do much by way of analysis due to restrictions caused by the pandemic, officers were now looking into this.</p> <p>Councillor McCall enquired as to what the Covid effect had been and gave examples of perhaps less road traffic incidents but more dwelling fires since people have been in their homes more. She noted the spike in Penicuik and Dalkeith for accidental dwelling fires. In response, Mr Gourlay advised that across the country there had been a number of tragic fatal fires where alcohol had played a part. However, across Midlothian the figure had come down dramatically in comparison to regional and national statistics. He advised home fire safety visits were now able to re-commence after additional training and PPE had been provided to officers and they will concentrate on areas of identified need.</p> <p>The Chair asked whether the figure of 5 out of 18 dwellings without working smoke alarms equated to homes with alarms fitted but not working. Mr Gourlay advised that it is a combination of them not working or not being fitted. He advised premises previously attended by officers do have smoke alarms fitted at that time.</p>		

Decision
The Board noted the content of the report

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.1.3	Local Community Fire and Rescue Plan Review 2020	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Outline of report and summary of discussion		
Stephen Gourlay advised the Police and Fire Reform legislation required a plan to be in place to meet the needs of the local community. He advised the priorities in the last plan were designed to be future proof and considered still to be fit for purpose. He was therefore seeking approval to take forward a new draft Midlothian plan.		
Decision		
The Board approved the terms of the draft plan.		

Report No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.2.1	Police Scotland Midlothian Area Command Quarter 1 report 2020 - 2021	Police Scotland
Outline of report and summary of discussion		
<p>Chief Superintendent McKenzie addressed the Board and welcomed the opportunity to get back to meetings. He summarised matters of relevance being – Covid-19; A68; Chief Constable's Pledge on assaults to emergency workers and additional information added to scrutiny report. He provided further detail with regard to each as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Covid-19 – Since lockdown on 23 March the response by the Police had changed with calls being graded and attended only when deemed necessary. Enquiries and statements had been made remotely and there had been an increased use of technology which he did not wish to lose going forward. He thanked Derek Oliver for assistance with licensed premises and confirmed they will continue to be monitored. He mentioned the Force Reserve Unit had been “stood-up” at the beginning of the pandemic and assistance can be sought from the Unit if and when required. He advised that in relation to crime statistics this year cannot be compared to others and when Chief Inspector Clinkscales addressed the quarterly report, he would touch on the 56% increase in anti-social behaviour reports which are a direct result of perceived social distancing breaches; (ii) A68 – He touched on the impact following the diversion of traffic to the B6368. He understood embankment repairs had taken place and he anticipated Transport Scotland announcing a predicted date of opening of the A68 and this information would be passed onto Members when known; (iii) Chief Constable's pledge on emergency worker assaults – the pledge was to highlight the issue of the impact of violence on emergency workers and he asked the Board to consider supporting it. He advised additional training had been arranged for Police officers and pointed out the increase in Quarter 1 – up from 20% to 27%. He advised there had been one hundred percent solvency of these crimes and the Police will continue to give this area the priority required. 		

- (iv) Additional Information added to Scrutiny report – He noted the addition of complaints data and advised this will develop over time. He further noted there had been an increase in complaints during the pandemic against Midlothian based officers. The reason for these was because people had not agreed with the way officers had dealt with reports.

Thereafter, the Chair advised the Board was happy to endorse the Chief Constable's pledge.

Questions were then put by Councillor Parry who asked about anti-social behaviour and in particular the perception that gatherings of young people are bad; an increase in complaints regarding inappropriate parking in housing estates and the national rise in commercial digital sexual exploitation and racial abuse where the message appears to be people should keep themselves safe as opposed to people should not be racist.

John McKenzie responded. With regard to gatherings of young people he suggested this fell into the category of reduced public tolerance and gave other examples. He advised the Police will always engage and encourage with enforcement being a last resort. He accepted parking had become a problem and again this involved trying to explain and encourage in relation to road safety. He confirmed he is aware of the significant increase in commercial digital sexual exploitation and would be happy to circulate a briefing paper to Board Members after the meeting. With regard to racist abuse, he advised whereas he did not wish to go into specifics of the recent high profile case, safety planning is put into place for individuals and officers are determined to reduce abuse and hate crime in Midlothian.

Councillor Muirhead wondered whether calls related to Covid-19 and recorded under anti-social behaviour were removed from the figures before the Board. Mr McKenzie advised the examples he provided were included in the figures which showed an increase of 56% however analysis undertaken would provide more accurate data. He offered to check the security marking on analysis carried out and if possible share with Board Members.

Councillor McCall remarked about the number of complaints she receives relating to the non-wearing of face coverings on public transport and in shops. She asked what reassurance can be given to the public. Mr McKenzie advised there needed to be a balance because going forward officers had to continue to have a good relationship with the public. He suggested the responsibility is 3 fold – person, supplier of the service and the Police. Derek Oliver advised Environmental Health and Trading Standards officers had been out engaging with businesses in conjunction with the Police and had found a general acceptance in the sector for the provisions of the legislation. The Chair advised he had concerns about a couple of shops in Danderhall and Dalkeith and was aware some shop workers had been told not to challenge customers not wearing a face covering.

The Chair then commented Board Members had not been afforded the opportunity to scrutinise the Quarter 4 results and asked for the report to be circulated to Members to allow them to consider and raise any issues with the Chief Inspector either before the next meeting or at it. Chief Inspector Clinkscales undertook to do this and then addressed the terms of the Quarter 1 2020-2021 report. He advised the #Kindness Midlothian campaign had helped considerably and partnership working with Derek Oliver and his staff had been positive. He advised it was a high priority to tackle drug supply and recently the

Head Teacher at Newbattle High School had agreed to fund the link officer post for another 2 years. He advised when the road network was quiet, officers took the opportunity to stop and speak to people to get an idea about what was going on which led to positive intelligence gathering. He mentioned the figure for looked after children absconding was still not good but noted positive discussions had taken place which should lead to a reduction. He summarised by noting many of the challenges officers face are from travelling criminals but these individuals had found it more difficult to operate during lockdown. He noted the decrease in reports of hate crime but wondered whether this may increase as a result of the recent high profile case.

The Chair enquired whether the Police could provide figures relating to hate crime incidents in Council buildings and Chief Inspector Clinkscales undertook to have a look at this and provide a response to the Chair. Councillor Parry advised she was receiving almost daily reports about stolen bikes and night time garden prowlers. She further mentioned Kirkhill Lodge being booked for events which have turned out to be raves. In response, Mr Clinkscales noted issues around Kennington Avenue which MCAT are now dealing with. He also advised he intends visiting Kirkhill Lodge to check what bookings they have and will provide an update to members thereafter. Councillor McCall enquired about wildlife offences (mentioned on Page 65 of the document pack) and wondered whether they related to Gladhouse Reservoir. Mr Clinkscales advised there had been quite a few meetings over the last few weeks and officers using quad bikes were now on patrol in the area. He advised the land was owned by Scottish Water and therefore was primarily an issue for them but given the level of camping and resultant scaring of wildlife, the Police had committed to patrols. Chief Superintendent Mckenzie made a comparison to the challenge going forward for police officers in Scotland whereby their powers were restricted to the issue of a £60 fixed penalty whereas in England and Wales fines of £10,000 can be issued to the organisers of large gatherings such as raves.

Decision

The Board noted the content of the report.

Agenda No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.2.2	Local Policing Priorities – Verbal Update	Chief Superintendent Mckenzie
Outline of report and summary of discussion		
Chief Superintendent Mckenzie briefly outlined the requirement of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) legislation which provided for a local Police plan. He advised this had been circulated and comments received thereon from the Chair. He thanked the Chair feedback and advised the plan will be published once signed off by Scottish Borders Council		
The Board noted the summary provided		

The meeting terminated at 12.46 pm