

Police and Fire and Rescue Committee
19 June 2023

IRVINE, 19 June 2023 - At a Meeting of the Police and Fire and Rescue Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Donald Reid, Stewart Ferguson, Jean McClung, Donald L. Reid and John Sweeney.

In Attendance

R. Lynch, Senior Manager Legal Services, Claire Cochrane, Solicitor (Legal Services), H. Clancy and D. McCaw, Committee Services Officers (Chief Executive's Service).

Also In Attendance

Chief Superintendent F. Hussein and Chief Inspector F. Normansell (Police Scotland); Area Commander I. McMeekin, Station Commander D. Murray and Watch Commander D. Wilson (Scottish Fire and Rescue Service).

Chair

Councillor Donald Reid in the Chair.

Apologies

Nairn McDonald, Davina McTiernan and Angela Stephen.

1. Chair's Remarks

The Chair welcomed Councillor Stewart Ferguson and Chief Inspector Fraser Normansell to their first meeting of the Police and Fire and Rescue Committee.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Standing Order 11 and Section 5 of the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Police and Fire and Rescue Committee held on 7 February 2023 were confirmed and the Minutes signed in accordance with Paragraph 7 (1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

4. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Performance and Service Update

Submitted report by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) which provided information on progress against the North Ayrshire Local Fire and Rescue Plan for the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023. Appendix A to the report provided an analysis of the performance across six indicators, using the rolling three-year average as a basis of measuring performance.

The statistical information identified a 2.7% decrease in activity levels across the local authority when compared to the corresponding period in 2021/22. A further review of the three-year average indicated a 1.9% increase in overall operational activity during a similar timeframe. Data on false alarms accounted for 60% of all demand within North Ayrshire, with fire related and special service activity accounting for 24% and 16% respectively.

Updates were also provided in relation to recent changes to support budget planning necessities to maintain effective services while optimizing resources and managing costs, the discontinuation of the response to automatic fire alarm calls from 1 July 2023 where no fire confirmation is received, recent recruitment within the Service, and the celebration of 50 years' service by Watch Commander Fred Williams from Dalry Community Fire Station.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, expressed best wishes and congratulations to Watch Commander Fred Williams on 50 years' service.

Members asked questions and were provided with further information in relation to:-

- staffing implications arising from the cessation of automatic fire alarm response at specific premises, unless confirmation of a fire had been received;
- the extent of automatic fire alarm calls which were real incidents;
- consultation and engagement which had taken place regarding future response to automatic fire alarm calls;
- the fact that 6% of operational activity related to false alarm calls;
- additional clarification on unwanted fire alarm criteria; and
- ongoing partnership work to reduce deliberate fire setting.

Area Commander McMeekin offered to meet with local Members to discuss concerns and to provide further information regarding deliberate fire setting in the Saltcoats and Stevenston and Irvine Moor areas.

Noted.

5. Police Scotland Performance Update

Submitted report by Police Scotland on performance in relation to the North Ayrshire Local Policing Plan for the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023 together with an overview of year end performance. A summary of current local policing plan priorities was also detailed.

The report provided information on North Ayrshire's performance, including a 4.1% decrease in the total number of crimes. The report further outlined progress in the areas of serious crime, safer communities, acquisitive crime, community wellbeing, road safety and public confidence with additional contextual information being provided by Superintendent Frew to the meeting.

Members asked questions and were provided with further information in relation to:-

- environmental health and cleanliness issues in connection with anti-social behaviour;
- the number of discontinued calls to the 101 number and the direction to members of the public to utilise email and online web forms as alternative methods of contact;
- the various methods used for collation of statistics;
- the reduction of full-time staffing levels within some sections of Police Scotland;
- full-time equivalent staffing levels being included within future reports;
- a zero-tolerance approach to drug driving and the use of drug wipes to determine those individuals driving under drugs influence;
- the enforcement of traffic violations by Police Scotland; and
- the benefits of CCTV cameras as a crime deterrent.

Chief Inspector Hussein offered to meet with local Members to discuss concerns and to provide further information regarding anti-social behaviour related to cleanliness and environmental health issues.

The Committee then discussed the Safer Shores multi-agency partnership initiative to safeguard those who visited the Ayrshire coast. Reference was made to the recent 'car cruise' which drew large crowds to the Irvine Beach area and caused major congestion and disruption. Police Scotland advised on the requirement for enhanced levels of co-ordination to take forward plans to manage the next scheduled 'car cruise'. Chief Inspector Hussein advised that the August Committee report would have a focus on the Safer Shores initiative and the 'car cruise'.

Noted.

6. Urgent Items

In terms of Standing Order 10.8, the Chair agreed that the following item be considered as urgent to allow the Committee to receive up-to-date information.

6.1 Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Act 2022

The Senior Manager, Legal Services, advised the Committee that in terms of the Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Act, 2022 which was introduced last year, Local Authority powers to designate firework control zones would come into effect on 22 June 2023. The Scottish Government were currently preparing guidance for Local Authorities on how to consider and establish the new zones. A report or Members briefing would be prepared once the guidance was released.

Noted.

The meeting ended at 3.40 p.m.