

Police and Fire and Rescue Committee
13 November 2023

At a Meeting of the Police and Fire and Rescue Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m. involving a combination of participation by remote electronic means and physical attendance within the Council Chambers, Irvine.

Present (Physical Participation)

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

In Attendance

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

Also In Attendance

Chief Superintendent R. Higgins, Chief Inspector F. Normansell and Sergeant W. Hutchison (Police Scotland); Area Commander I. McMeekin, Watch Commander D. Wilson and Chaplain Father J. Thomson (Scottish Fire and Rescue Service); and D. Young, His Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate.

Chair

Councillor Donald Reid in the Chair.

Apologies

Scott Davidson, John Glover, Nairn McDonald and Angela Stephen.

1. 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.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Police and Fire and Rescue Committee held on 14 August 2023 were confirmed and the Minutes signed in accordance with Paragraph 7 (1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

3. 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 2023 – 30 September 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. Appendix B detailed the Pre-Budget Scrutiny report submitted to the Scottish Parliament Criminal Justice Committee.

The statistical information identified a 0.7% increase in activity levels across the local authority when compared to the previous fiscal reporting period. A further review of activity over the rolling three years average indicated a 12.2% decrease in operational demand over the recording period. Data on false alarms accounted for 57.7% of all demand within North Ayrshire, with fire related and special service activity accounting for 27.9% and 14.4% respectively. Additional contextual information was provided by Area Commander McMeekin to the meeting.

Updates were also provided in relation to attendance at the Scottish Parliament Criminal Justice Committee's Pre-Budget Scrutiny meeting, the recent Fire Safety Awareness Event, collaboration with partners to identify unoccupied and derelict buildings to mitigate the risks of deliberate fire setting, the expansion in the delivery of educational activities into the Dreghorn Community Fire Station to support key aspects of the educational curriculum, and attacks on SFRS personnel in the lead up to Guy Fawkes/Bonfire Night. The Committee was also advised that a review of the current Local Fire Plan, in line with legislation, would be submitted for consideration and comment at a future date.

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

- any anticipated impact on service provision arising from the temporary removal of 5 second or third appliances from multi-pump stations across the West of Scotland;
- staffing implications arising from the 2023 savings plan and budget provision;
- the high instances of accidental dwelling fires related to cooking and distraction, notably in the Saltcoats and Stevenston area;
- ongoing work to reduce the number of unwanted fire alarm signals, with an evaluation over a six-month period being submitted to the Committee once available;
- any trends concerning deliberate fire setting in the Irvine West and Saltcoats and Stevenston areas;
- ongoing partnership work to reduce deliberate fire setting;
- the breakdown and classification of fire service activity within a 24-hour time period;
- the ongoing relevance of home fire safety visits following the introduction of legislation around linked fire alarm systems; and
- retained duty system contracts and response times.

The Committee agreed to note (i) the content of the report and (ii) that a review of the current Local Fire Plan would be submitted to a future meeting for consideration and comment.

4. 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 2023 – 30 September 2023. A summary of current local policing plan priorities was also detailed.

The report provided information on North Ayrshire's performance, including a 6% increase in the total number of crimes. The report further outlined progress in the areas of serious crime, violence against women and girls, safer communities, community wellbeing, road safety and public confidence, with additional contextual information provided by Chief Superintendent Higgins to the meeting.

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

- any identified trends concerning anti social behaviour arising from high profile visits to licences premises;
- the reduction in late hours opening venues across North Ayrshire and the overall downward trend in relation to violence in town centres;
- clarification on domestic abuse cases and follow up in terms of support available for victims;
- multi-agency work to engage with vulnerable community members with serious mental ill-health;
- the response by Police Scotland to any call identifying threat, risk or harm and immediate concern for the safety of any individual;
- reciprocal arrangements in place when dealing with major events across North Ayrshire and the wider Greater Glasgow area;
- the use of tasers and firearms by Police Scotland during the last period under review;
- the low response to the public confidence survey and the forthcoming effort to encourage public engagement; and
- the future implementation of enhanced communication methods in terms of methods of contact for members of the public.

The Committee was then provided with verbal updates from Police Scotland and the Fire and Rescue Service in relation to the recent joint working arrangements in place with the Council to tackle early identification of illegal bonfire locations to ensure that materials at some sites could be safely removed. Progress to tackle illegal bonfires would be assisted by ongoing work to determine whether to designate any areas as Firework Control Zones in terms of new legislation.

Recent attacks on both Police Scotland and SFRS emergency personnel were also highlighted and Police Scotland advised instances would be reported within the next period's statistics.

The Chair advised that updates on Operation Moonbeam by Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Streetscene, including information detailing joint working arrangements to tackle attacks on emergency personnel, should be submitted to the next meeting for consideration.

The Committee agreed (a) that updates on Operation Moonbeam by Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Streetscene, including information detailing joint working arrangements to tackle attacks on emergency personnel, should be submitted to the next meeting for consideration; and (b) otherwise, to note the content of the report.

The meeting ended at 4.00 p.m.