Police Service:

1. In your view, what have been the consequences of the 2012 Act for the police service? Please set out your views on (a) any benefits and (b) any negative consequences of the 2012 Act for the police service.

a) The benefits to Police Scotland will have been financial through the centralisation of support services such as fleet management, HR, finance etc. The rationalisation from eight to one unified force should bring economies of scale and more efficient and effective use of resources.

Like all large public authorities Police Scotland have to make most effective use of all their assets, and rationalisation and disposal of underutilised buildings, for example, are a very prudent means of making efficiencies without impacting on front line staffing.

As referenced later, there has been a perceived impact on the general level of service post-reform.

Partnership Working
The strong working relationship that exists between the legacy of Grampian Police force and its partners continues. There is a strong culture of positive engagement between agencies with a focus on working through challenges to find a solution that works for all.

From an operational local perspective, a consequence and benefit of the Act has been a strengthening of the connection between services and communities and better integration with the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership. Examples of this at an Aberdeenshire level include active Police participation in the Active Hub pilot project supported by the Community Safety Partnership and Alcohol and Drugs Partnership. Police Scotland also play a positive active role within the multi-agency Grampian Gypsy/Traveller Group and at a local level provide guidance and support to Licensing Boards and Fora regarding the public safety and public order aspects of alcohol licensing.

Strategic Planning
The local Policing Plan for Aberdeenshire is welcomed, as is the commitment to Community Justice. The willingness to look at doing things differently in Aberdeenshire to prevent people from becoming further involved in the justice system is also welcomed.
Future collaborative working includes the integration of Local Authority and Police in Peterhead. This will further support cohesive service delivery for our communities in the North of Aberdeenshire.

We would welcome the opportunity to influence the strategic planning process in order to reflect our local vision and priorities. That could be through, for example, earlier engagement on the strategic plan.

Overall it is worth recognising that Aberdeenshire remains a safe place to live and work, mainly due to our successful joint working to intervene early and prevent crime and disorder.

**Scrutiny**
The system of reporting through Area and Communities Committees is generally working well. The 2012 Act has provided Aberdeenshire Council elected members with a more formalised scrutiny role.

b) It is always difficult to balance centralisation with localism and over the last few years the work with Police Scotland has changed as that balance has shifted.

At the time of the merger of a legacy force being brought into the single force for Scotland, concerns were expressed regarding the loss of local knowledge and flexibility to adapt and respond to local issues. There was concern that one size would not fit all. This has been felt in relation to call handling for Police Scotland. Some challenges have been faced with the new control centre structure.

**Child Care and Protection Partnership Working**
Although local initiatives to strengthen police resilience in this crucial area are welcome, there have been instances where the national drivers in Police Scotland have been experienced as other services having to adapt to a Police initiative rather than a mature partnership approach being adopted at the outset. Typically the strength of local working relationships has enabled us to mitigate the impact of this on our effective partnership led work, but the expenditure on time/resource required to do so has been unfortunate.

**Resources**
Police Scotland is supportive of and actively involved in the Community Planning and Community Justice processes. However, it is recognised that resources are finite and capacity can be an issue, particularly reflecting the myriad of local groups and partnership plans that are in place. Particular mention should be made of their excellent support with regards Child & Adult Protection.

The recruitment for civilian posts appears to have become more problematic, as this is dealt with centrally, which causes delays and a knock-on impact at a local level.

**Council Services**
The introduction of the single police force has had some adverse consequences for services such as Infrastructure Services. Positive initiatives have had to stop including the Road Safety Education resource, traffic wardens and Safety
Camera Partnerships. However, over the last 12 months, it is felt local officers have started to demonstrate more autonomy when working with the Council’s Infrastructure Services in order to provide an appropriate local response.

Through community engagement, motorists speeding through villages or concerns about parking around schools are frequently raised by our local communities and expectations that these issues are addressed. However there have been examples of partnership working at a local level to aid endeavours to resolve issues raised by some of our communities such as anti-social behaviours/anti-social driving and initiatives launched such as the no parking on zig zag lines outside schools’ campaign (in 2016).

**Scrutiny at a local level**
The relationship with Police colleagues is a positive one. We acknowledge resource constraints make attendance at all Area Committees difficult, however, the close daily working partnership allows for any issues to be dealt with timeously, and formal reporting is provided when required.

The 2012 Act has provided Aberdeenshire Council elected members with a more formalised scrutiny role, statistical information on trends etc have been removed and, following discussion with Councillors, reports take the form of a more general narrative. It is noted that reports and information may need to be more tailored, and there should be continued dialogue to discover what kind of information would be most useful for councillors to receive when carrying out their scrutiny role.

**Local Involvement**
The ambition under a unified force was to put local communities’ concerns at the heart of policing priorities. Providing regular updates to community councils is valued and viewed as important to continue, strengthening the connection between this service and communities at a local area level.

It is noted that presence at Community Councils and associations is not always consistent, however, the new system of a monthly report means that information should be received regardless. There is acknowledgement that it is not always the best use of police time for them to attend every such meeting.

A recent series of workshops has seen the Council, Police and Community Council representatives working towards finding a way which suits all. Some Community Councils now have a member who is a ‘police liaison’ – Banchory and Huntly are examples. This ensures a line of communication should any local problems arise.

**Monitoring & Reporting**
The centralisation of specialist units such as the analytical teams has impacted on local level access to appropriate Police data. Personnel continue to work together to look for ways to resolve this, focussing on the service delivery to communities.
Strategic Planning

There is a willingness to find out about practice in different parts of the country and to consider how this could be adapted or implemented in Aberdeenshire.

Historically many innovative practices were developed at a local level, however in some areas, Police engagement with young people through activities has been lost, eg street football.

2. **Have the policy intentions of the 2012 Act in relation to the police service been met?**

**Policy Intention - To protect and improve local services despite financial cuts, by stopping duplication of support services eight times over and not cutting front line services;**

The policy intentions of the 2012 Act were to create a single police force for Scotland and to save money by creating a new structure with less bureaucracy. It is noted that there has been press coverage about financial difficulties with the police force, as well as governance issues, and so there is work to be done in these areas.

We recognise that all public sector organisations are facing financial challenges, and Police Scotland have clearly articulated their intention and aspirations through their Strategic Plan. We also acknowledge the difficult decisions that have subsequently been made to streamline the organisation whilst still delivering a service to all communities.

**Policy Intention - To create more equal access to specialist support and national capacity like murder investigation teams, firearms teams or flood rescue – where and when they are needed;**

Dedicated specialist teams may have been relocated to a centralised resource, to ensure ease of deployment in areas of most need, however where there is a requirement in the North East, it is made available.

The diversity of the North East is recognised in the specialist resources that are made available.

**Policy Intention – To strengthen the connection between services and communities, by creating a new formal relationship with each of the 32 local authorities, involving many more local councillors and better integrating with community planning partnerships.**

Police Scotland are very active contributors to a range of Aberdeenshire Partnership Working Groups such as the CPP Board; the ADP and its Early Intervention and Prevention sub-group; the Community Safety Partnership, the Community Learning Partnership etc.
3. In your view, what have been the consequences of the 2012 Act for the fire and rescue service? Please set out your views on (a) any benefits and (b) any negative consequences of the 2012 Act for the fire and rescue service.

a) As reflected in section one, there are benefits to the introduction of the 2012 Act through the centralisation of support services such as fleet management, HR, finance etc. The rationalisation of one unified service will bring economies of scale and more efficient and effective use of resources. A consequence and benefit of the 2012 Act has been a strengthening of the connection between services and communities and better integration with community planning partnerships. Examples of this at an Aberdeenshire level include the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service delivering free local CPR training in Local Fire Stations to local volunteer Health Walk Leaders following this need being identified by the AHSCPs Health Walks Coordinator. The Community Support and Safety Officer post in Marr, jointly funded by Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Community Safety Partnership in Aberdeenshire is another example of an approach designed to establish better links with communities, particularly with more vulnerable clients who may benefit from services/support provided by other agencies and has the potential to be rolled out more widely.

b) Collaboration
Fire Service colleagues continue to engage at a local community planning level. Establishing closer links with communities and the community planning process could be affected by staff capacity to support more local ambitions. Discussions will be held locally where this may present an issue. It is also recognised that there are complex local planning initiatives which need to be simplified to aid community planning engagement by all partners.

There is a potential risk that too strong a focus on hierarchical structures such as national priorities and community planning structures could constrain the service’s ability to focus on needs at a locality level. It is felt by some Council officers that in the longer term this could constrain our ability to work at a very localised level and develop innovative practice focused on early intervention and prevention. This will be kept under review through our partnership arrangements.

The recent consultation on proposed changes to firefighter roles are innovative, and the service seem to have really taken them on board, welcoming the new responsibilities.

c) Scrutiny
The system of reporting through Area and Communities Committees is generally working well. It is noted that reports and information may need to be more tailored, and there should be continued dialogue to discover what kind of information would be most useful for councillors to receive when carrying out their scrutiny role.
4. **Have the policy intentions of the 2012 Act in relation to the fire and rescue service been met?**

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service are active contributors to a range of Aberdeenshire Partnership Working Groups such as the CPP Board; the ADP and its early Intervention and prevention sub-group; the Community Safety Partnership, the Community Learning Partnership etc.

**Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership**

The Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership is supportive of the proposed emphasis on prevention, strengthening services in rural communities within the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service strategic approach. Proposed extension of prevention role for SFRS staff to include for example work around antisocial behaviour, reducing reoffending, domestic abuse, falls risk assessment and prevention and ‘safe and well’ checks has the potential to complement the work of other partners across Aberdeenshire following further discussion locally regarding organisational boundaries for this work. The SFRS contributed to a national Emergency Medical Response pilot programme which has delivered positive outcomes (Aberdeenshire was one of the pilot areas) and allowed the SFRS to utilise their skills and expertise in a non-traditional way. There is potential for this model to be developed further.

NHS Occupational Therapy (OT) Team Leads have been working with the Fire & Rescue Service on reducing falling, which is about a more joint approach and ensuring home visits and appropriate referrals. For example, the OT visits and discovers it would useful to have involvement from the Fire Service or vice versa, SFRS will visit then do a referral to OT.

**Other Issues:**

5. **Are there any other issues you would like to raise in connection with the operation of the 2012 Act?**

**Community Planning Partnership**

We welcome the fact that both Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, and Police Scotland Strategy documents make explicit reference and commitment to supporting partnership working. In general, the challenge is to maintain the local focus across a nationally governed organisation. This must be maintained by the good quality partner relationships across Aberdeenshire. The direction being taken with Community Planning is key around keeping those relationships working and delivering for our communities. The move to area/locality plans should allow for that local focus to remain.

Aberdeenshire Council

21 June 2018