1. Introduction

1.1 This paper provides background information on the governance and operational arrangements and work of the Scottish Borders Council’s Police, Fire and Rescue and Safer Communities Board and the development of the Scottish Borders Local Police Plan 2017-2020 and Fire and Rescue Plans 2018.

2. Governance and Operation of Board

2.1 Scottish Borders Council was one of six pathfinder local authorities who volunteered to pilot the new local scrutiny arrangements that would come into place with the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012. The Scottish Borders Council’s Police, Fire and Rescue and Safer Communities Board held its first meeting as a Pathfinder Board on 28 September 2012.

2.2 From the beginning, the Board included Council members from the Administration and members from the Opposition together with representatives from key partners i.e. NHS Borders, the Scottish Borders Housing Network and the voluntary and business sectors. Currently the Board comprises 6 Council members and 4 representatives from the partner bodies.

2.3 The Board is chaired by an elected member of the Council and meets on a quarterly basis, and operates on a consensus approach to decision-making.

2.4 Safer Communities features in the title of the Board because of the priority Scottish Borders Council has given to partnership working on community safety. Since 2010 its work on community safety has been underpinned by a co-located team from the Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership working alongside Council’s Community Safety employees. These community safety staff have focused their work on tackling anti-social behaviour and violence against women, and taking forward community safety prevention initiatives. The team also includes an analytical capacity with a Council analyst working alongside a Police Scotland member of staff who monitors all crime incidents in the Scottish Borders.

2.5 Recognising the activities of this co-located Unit, the opportunity was taken to extend the remit of the Board from the start to include the scrutinising of community safety activity. This allowed a much more holistic and rounded approach which is recognised now in Community Planning.

2.6 The Board advises the Council on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Scottish Borders Policing, Fire and Rescue and Safer Communities Plans in terms of priorities, community engagement and performance related measures to provide reasonable assurance of effective and efficient implementation and
operation; and makes recommendations on any aspect of these Plans in terms of issues or improvements.

2.7 The Board remit also includes: contributing to the delivery of the Scottish Borders Single Outcome Agreement (now the Scottish Borders Community Plan (LOIP – Local Outcome Improvement Plan) within the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership, and in particular the local outcome indicators and programme in relation to the national outcome “We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger”; monitoring and keeping under review progress and delivery of all Safer Communities projects and initiatives; and considering draft responses to any consultation documents pertaining to policing, fire and rescue services, and safer communities.

3. Work of the Board

3.1 The Agenda for Board meetings comprise quarterly progress performance reports on the local plans from Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Scottish Borders Safer Communities Team. In addition the reports highlight key activities, issues and partnership working in relation to the various items contained in the Plan. Other matters outside of the Plan are highlighted if these have been identified as important policing, fire and rescue and safer communities’ issues during the quarter. Key national and local operational matters are also mentioned and discussed as part of updates on the Police and Fire and Rescue performance reports.

3.2 The meetings normally conclude with a presentation and over the years the topics have included

- Rural Crime
- Wildlife Crime
- Tackling Domestic Abuse – Pathway Project updates
- Campaigns such as Stair Aware project by Fire and Rescue Stair Aware Project, Under Age Drinking
- Community Safety in relation to the Borders Railway
- Community Justice
- Road Safety
- The Scottish Ambulance Service
- The Coastguard Service

3.3 The Board has recognised that partnership working is critical in the Scottish Borders and has supported a range of initiatives including the driver awareness initiatives for young people and older people; motor bike safety; water safety; prevention of alcohol and drugs abuse campaigns focused on young people; tackling domestic abuse and violence against and women; and other initiatives such as reducing rural crime.

3.4 The Board is aware and has appreciated the national specialist support from Police Scotland that has been provided to Scottish Borders in relation to events such as the Melrose Sevens, special crime investigations, serious organised
crime, and counter terrorism. Also the Scottish Borders is able to draw on specialist fire and rescue service support if this is required such as tacking major fires and other incidents.

3.5 Board members have visited police and fire and rescue services facilities including the Bilston Glen police call centre (three visits) and fire stations including Galashiels and Hawick fire stations. They have also viewed fire and rescue exercises in relation to fire safety, water rescue and chemical incidents.

3.6 The Board has referred to Scottish Borders Council for approval a range of responses to national police and fire and rescue consultations on strategic policy such as the national Strategic Police plans and the Scottish Fire Framework and other policy areas such as Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland’s National Annual Scrutiny plan proposals. The need for improvements to national/local relations has been a key issue for the Board and it has been at forefront of encouraging stronger links between the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Police Authority and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Board.

3.7 The Board has been visited by Scottish Police Authority (SPA) and Scottish Fire and Rescue Board members together with senior officers from Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Services. Indeed there was regular representation at one stage by a SPA member. The Board is keen to strengthen links with both the SPA and Scottish Fire and Rescue Board and it would be keen for a member of each of these bodies to attend its meetings on a regular basis to further strengthen local and national relationships.

4. Scottish Borders Local Police and Fire and Rescue Plans

4.1 The current Scottish Borders Local Police Plan 2017-2020 and Fire and Rescue Plans 2018 were supported by the Board following consultation and approved by Scottish Borders Council. They build on the previous Local Police and Fire and Rescue plans for 2014 – 2017, along with strategic assessments, and consultations with local communities and partners. The plans are sensitive to the rural nature of the Scottish Borders with its distributed set of towns and local communities; the demographic composition of the area with its ageing population; and the vital importance of partnership working in relation to prevention and early intervention and the need for strong linkages of policing and fire and rescue services into community planning.

4.2 With respect to the Scottish Borders Community Plan a great deal of work has been undertaken to ensure that the local Police and Fire and Rescue Plans contribute to improving local outcomes particularly in relation to the Quality of Life theme.

**Scottish Borders Local Police Plan 2017-2020**

4.3 In relation to the Scottish Borders Local Police Plan 2017-2020 there is recognition that 80% of the people they deal with involve vulnerable people and need the support of other local services.
4.4 Based on the above analysis and past work it is no surprise that key issues identified in the local Police Plan were:

- Tackling domestic abuse and this linking with the Council’s pioneering Pathfinder project.
- Road Safety which has been a continuing issue in the Scottish Borders in relation to the relatively high numbers of people killed or injured on the roads.
- Violent Crime which although there are relatively low numbers in the Scottish Borders is an important issue for the public.
- Anti-Social Behaviour which as elsewhere is a key concern for local communities.
- Drugs and Alcohol Abuse, which is a particular issue of concern in relation to the influences on young people.
- Protecting People which links to child and adult protection and the demographics of the Scottish Borders with its relatively large numbers of older people and the prevalence of age related illnesses which increase vulnerability.
- Acquisitive Crime and the particularly concerns around rural crime on farm and other countryside premises.

**Community Fire and Rescue Plan for the Scottish Borders 2018**

4.5 The Community Fire and Rescue Plan for the Scottish Borders 2018 recognised the continued importance of preparing for and responding to incidents such as fires and road traffic collisions. However it also recognised the changing risks which are particularly apparent in the Scottish Borders relating to its ageing population and the effects of climate change is causing more extreme weather events such as flooding, heavy snow and drought related fires.

4.6 In relation to the changing risks the Board has been very supportive of the pilot project involving local crews responding to Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrests (OHCA) in support of the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) colleagues. In addition it been very pleased by the way in which home safety visits have evolved into a more holistic approach, taking into account the risk of slips, trips and falls in the home as well as identifying those at risk from fuel poverty and other vulnerabilities.

4.7 From the analysis of changing risks and building on past work, the local priorities in the Plan accorded well with the concerns of the Scottish Borders Police, Fire and Rescue and Safer Communities Board. These priorities are embedded in partnership working and they are about:

- Making people safer in their homes
- Promoting Community Resilience whilst contributing to improved outcomes for people involved in non-fire emergencies.
- Contributing to making Scottish Borders roads safer.
- Challenging Anti-Social Behaviour, particularly in relation to reducing deliberate fires.
- Reduce the occurrence and impact of Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals.
Community Planning Localities

4.8 Both Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service work closely with Scottish Borders Council and other Community Planning Partners in the five Localities in the Scottish Borders. This involves responding to local community safety matters and supporting the development of Locality plans. There is also close contact with community councils throughout the Scottish Borders.

Douglas Scott
Scottish Borders Council
23 October 2018