Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Impact of police reform on local policing

Written submission from George Simpson

Based on publicised information, I sometime prior to the inception of the above submitted an item to a national newspaper where the editor failed to pass it on to the pressroom. I concluded this article thus “Another MacAskill fiasco looming?” The answer was obviously yes.

I don’t know how MacAskill would fair in another senior position, he is certainly not a suitable Justice Minister, a point I have made to the present Scottish Parliament on more than one occasion.

The administrative problems and wasted expenditure so far is now common knowledge so I do not need to detail these.

Now Mr House has decided he does not want his officers sitting around in police offices, he wants them on the street and in order to achieve this he intends closing rural offices.

Two offices earmarked for closure are familiar to myself namely Shotts, North Lanarkshire and Strathaven, South Lanarks.

To expand on the latter. Police presence here is already minimal. Once the office is closed the Strathaven-based officers will require to travel 8 miles to East Kilbride for their refreshment period or report writing, and during such periods the OIC there will not deprive the town by allocating a vehicle ‘to cover’ Strathaven area.

Should an incident occur in the Strathaven area then the Strathaven-based officers would require to attend irrespective of their refreshment period, a situation I have significant experience of. These officers only get a refreshment break if the exigencies of duty permit, unlike rural ambulance personnel who refuse to attend a ‘call-out’ as he is refreshing. Worse still his actions were supported by his union.

Another point is that should a member of the public find something of value/importance which by law is required to be lodged at the police office, the finders would be less likely to travel eight miles or more to find a manned office.

Even before my own retirement many motorists failed to wear seat belts, used mobile phones whilst driving and exceeded the speed limit and the majority ‘got away with it’. However since April 2013 these offences have become very serious according to figures published. It appears Police Scotland is an anti-motorist force akin to Edinburgh City Council.

Graeme Pearson MSP is ‘spot on’ when he says the formation of the single force was no thought-out properly, rushed into and is a total shambles.

George Simpson
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