Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Impact of police reform on local policing

Written submission from Anthony Birchall

After reading the article in the Press & Journal regarding submissions relating to Policing and how the reforms are affecting the public, I would like to put a recent event forward, that I feel is a direct failure of yours and your predecessor’s actions.

I will start at the very beginning, 20 years ago, when I first moved to the village. At that time we had a small police station with a resident police officer, who carried out the normal duties of foot patrol plus vehicle patrol.

That situation lasted for a few years and everybody was happy.

Then came the first set of cuts, by whoever was in power at that time and the local officer was moved away, but still on call, albeit from about 25 miles away. Of course we lost the foot patrols, which also clashed with the council putting, what you might call undesirables, into the village!

At least we still knew and could speak to our local police officer, usually being able to contact directly, the relevant station.

Now that has all changed and we have to speak to somebody at the other end of the country, who has no local knowledge what-so-ever, (will it be somebody in India next year).

I now bring you to the event in September. On the 18th of that month we were unfortunate to have all our communications severed, (telephone/broadband and mobiles!!), this left us with no access to the emergency services for 10 hours, until BT were able to repair the fault.

Apparently the Police were aware of this, but felt fit not to put a presence in the village. I have since managed to speak to an officer regarding the situation and he said they had spoken to somebody on the day, but the offer to attend was rejected!!!

An offer should not have even been put forward to anybody, (?), they should have attended automatically, as it was an emergency situation.

I have heard nothing since, although he said he would escalate the problem.

So is this the result of Police Reform and the future outlook for crime prevention in Scotland.

I hope this will be of some assistance in your discussions. I would also appreciate your views and any leverage you can use, so that this situation may never happen again.