Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Impact of police reform on local policing

Written submission from North Ayrshire Council

In response to the call for evidence on the Impact of Police Reform on Local Policing, North Ayrshire Council comment as follows.

The Justice Sub-Committee have sought particular views on the following issues:

- The impact of Police Reform on the police services you have in your area;
- Whether local policing services have improved since the 1st April, remain the same or deteriorated in your area; and
- Whether you feel that local policing services have been designed to address the specific needs particular to your local area and if there have been any changes to approach since 1st April?

Prior to responding to these particular questions it would be helpful to outline the arrangements in place for policing in North Ayrshire and the expected direction of travel.

North Ayrshire Council and Strathclyde Police/Police Scotland are core Community Planning Partners. Audit Scotland conducted a review of community planning within North Ayrshire during 2012 and their conclusion was that community planning was well-embedded within North Ayrshire. The next stage was to deliver clear outcomes for the community.

In order to deliver outcomes the Council and its communities have worked in partnership with the Police. Since 1st April 2010, the Council has had a post of Director of Community Safety appointed by the Police. Over a much longer time we have had a Local Liaison Officer. We also have campus police officers and other police posts funded by the Council. These posts have enabled close links to be built up between the Council and the Police, both in relation to community planning and general policing or security issues.

In terms of delivering outcomes for the community there have been a number of key developments within North Ayrshire. The key strategy has been a six week multi-agency targeted intervention into particular areas. The Police, Council and other Community Planning Partners will meet to map the issues facing communities and agree a six week targeted multi-agency intervention in a particular area. The aim is not just to break the back of particular issues, but to build up community resilience and community contacts which can be used to reduce crime on a long term basis. The interventions have also been very effective in getting different agencies and the community to work together, and creating an awareness of what each can do. In other words the aim is that the sum is greater than the parts. Performance evidence tends to suggest that these interventions are very effective in reducing levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, both on a short term and longer term basis.
Another particularly innovative project has been the Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Response Team, involving the Police. The team aim to have a targeted response to incidents of domestic abuse ensuring that support and assistance from a number of agencies can be delivered in as short a time as possible. Once again this has been very successful and the number of children admitted into care as a result of incidents of domestic abuse has shown a substantial reduction.

During 2012/13 the Council had a Shadow Police and Fire Committee which dealt with issues relating to policing in North Ayrshire and the transition to the new national Police service. Since 1st April 2013 the Council has a Police and Fire & Rescue Committee. This meets quarterly with representatives of Police and Fire & Rescue present. In addition to dealing with local and national plans the committee receives reports from Police and Fire & Rescue Service on their performance in North Ayrshire. This has been effective in allowing issues effecting policing in North Ayrshire to be fully explored.

As the sub-committee will be aware, various changes to policing in Strathclyde were introduced during the tenure of Sir Stephen House as Strathclyde’s Police Constable. It was widely expected that the more effective changes introduced into the Strathclyde Force would, following 1st April 2013 be adopted throughout Scotland. We are also aware that some of the more innovative aspects of policing in North Ayrshire had been identified as both effective and best practice and of wider interest throughout Strathclyde in Scotland. In these circumstances it was our expectation that the direction of travel under Police Scotland would reaffirm, rather than change the approach to policing in North Ayrshire. As such we did not expect much change in the short term. This has been our experience.

Turning to the particular issues on which the sub-committee seek evidence we comment on these in turn:

1. **The impact of Police Reform on the Police Services you have in your area**

   The Police Reform has had no detrimental impact on the close community planning links between the Council and the Police. While a number of the senior officers with whom the Council closely worked have moved on to other posts, new officers have adopted a similar approach. It is also worth mentioning that under the previous arrangements only a limited number of Local Authority Councillors attended the Police Board. The new Police and Fire & Rescue Committee allows a greater number of Elected Members to scrutinise plans and performance information relating to Police in North Ayrshire. This also allows a spread of members across geographical areas and political groups to be involved.

2. **Whether local policing services have improved since 1st April 2013, remained the same or deteriorated in your area?**

   As a result of the existing innovative work being carried out by local Police and Community Planning Partners, there have been improvements in policing and the formation of the Police Scotland has reaffirmed this work and its benefits.
3. Whether you feel the local policing services have been designed to address the specific needs particular to your local area and if there have been any changes to approach since 1st April?

The whole process of Police Reform has emphasised the importance of engagement with local Community Planning Partners within North Ayrshire. This was already a key part of our work. However the fact that it has been given such clear status in policing plans and legislation is important as it helps to reaffirm this direction of travel.

One of the key areas of recent controversy across Scotland has related to the proposals in relation to Police Counter Services. It should be noted that similar work was carried out by Strathclyde Police two years ago. Within our area we would have expected to have seen changes whether or not we had remained with the Strathclyde Force or the new National Force.

In conclusion, there has been little if any change within North Ayrshire and the positive work between the Police, Council and other Community Planning Partners has continued to blossom.

North Ayrshire Council
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