Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Impact of police reform on local policing

Written submission from West Dunbartonshire Council and West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership

1. West Dunbartonshire Council welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence on the impact of police reform on local policing since the inception of Police Scotland on 1 April 2013.

2. It is first important to note the rapid pace and scale of change for Police Scotland since the single force came into being on 1 April 2013. We recognise the potential impact that this may have at a local policing level in terms of business continuity and changes in physical and people resources.

3. It is also important to highlight the very strong and positive partnership in place with our local police services with clearly defined objectives and targets at a local level.

4. The context surrounding the implementation of the reform was a particularly challenging one. The Local Authority, the Police and community planning partner agencies are experiencing challenging financial pressures in delivering core services moving forward. This clearly requires joint business planning to ensure that the Police and the Local Authority can make best use of all of their conjoined physical and people resources, without impacting financially or otherwise on their business partners.

5. There was a clear commitment in place from senior officers from Police Scotland, at a local level, to ensure that the transition from a local to national service had as little impact on local policing as possible. This commitment included assurances that our locally developed and robust planning and mitigation arrangements are continued.

6. However, as was expected with change of this scale and pace, there has been some limited impact on business continuity both in terms of building and sustaining working relationships and in relation to obtaining information and understanding the changing and evolving Police structures, roles and responsibilities at a local level.

7. As a result of the strong history of partnership working in West Dunbartonshire any concerns and issues are able to be raised and addressed at the appropriate time and a solution found. We are in continual discussion with police colleagues locally about planning for any service changes as a result of national service change implementation.

8. A small concern has been raised in discussion with our communities about risks to local relationships based on unplanned changes within the community policing team. However we are in regular dialogue with our police partners and are
working to ensure that all of our joint resources are aligned to meet the perceived and actual needs of our communities.

9. There is no doubt that the strong working relationship and commitment to local outcomes in West Dunbartonshire has not changed as a result of police reform from April 1 2013. There is a clear focus from the Divisional Commander through to the Local Authority Liaison Officer on the local area and the outcomes required to deliver for the area. Police Scotland is a key local partner and we look forward to continuing our strong partnership.

West Dunbartonshire Council & West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership
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