Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Impact of police reform on local policing

Written submission from Aberdeenshire Council


1. Introduction
This is an interim report on research into changes in partnership working and performance in Aberdeenshire since the introduction of Police Scotland on 1st April 2013. There is limited information available to inform an assessment of any changes therefore the intention will be to follow up this report in due course when further information becomes available.

In responding to the Scottish Parliament Justice Sub-Committee on Local Policing, Aberdeenshire Council wishes to make the following introductory remarks:

- The Council commends the continued strong performance of Police Scotland in keeping Aberdeenshire communities safe.
- Amid the financial pressures faced by all of the public sector, the Council recognises the significant challenge of police reform and the transition to a single agency. It is critical however that engagement with local authorities, and local communities, is effective in managing any proposed changes in the way Police Scotland deliver their services at a local level.
- The Council has a strong and productive relationship with Police Scotland at a local level that has been evident both through informal working relationships and formally at Policy and Resources Committee, Area Committees, the Community Planning Partnership Board and Local Community Planning Groups.

2. Staffing and Resources
Specific details on Police Officer staffing and resource availability in Aberdeenshire since the 1st April are not available.

Part of the picture has been made available in regards to civilian posts.

- From the Grampian Police legacy force, 48 civilian staff applications for voluntary redundancy/early retirement (VR/ER) were processed between 1st April 2013 and 29th August 2013 (FOI request submitted by a Mr Robert James, 21st September 2013).
- This figure reflects the proportion of Grampian Police applications from the total (393) submitted to the National Voluntary Release Panel between 1st April and 29th August 2013, out of the total number of applications received as of 29th August 2013 (1,426), and therefore the true figure may be higher.
- It is projected by Police Scotland that there will be further reductions in civilian posts as reported to the Justice Committee, 29th October 2013. Specifically, it is estimated that 175 support staff (nationwide) will be lost as a result of public counter service closures (as reported to the Justice Sub-Committee, 31st October 2013).
• Reduction in the number of Road Safety Advisors from ten to two.
• There is one remaining Traffic Warden in Aberdeenshire, based in Inverurie. In the near future Police Scotland plan to withdraw all Traffic Warden Services in Aberdeenshire however certain traffic/parking offences which still constitute a criminal act, including dangerous parking, will continue to be enforced by police officers.
• Police Scotland is currently reviewing the Partnership Analyst role, including job description and pay grading. This may affect partnership working in Aberdeenshire. The main changes proposed include the removal of senior partnership analysts, transfer of partnership analysts to sit with police analysts in divisional headquarters, generic job descriptions for these posts and one pay structure (with resulting pay cuts for most partnership analysts). The Scottish Community Safety Network has put forward a counter proposal to Police Scotland which has been accepted. Discussions continue to take place.

3. Road Safety
The two remaining Road Safety Advisors continue to provide Road Safety Education across Aberdeenshire and there has been a local commitment to the Safe Drive Stay Alive campaign in Aberdeenshire. Police Scotland supported Safe Drive, Stay Alive in 2013 and the event was seen as a success. A further commitment from Police Scotland to support Safe Drive, Stay Alive in 2014 was made on the 20th January 2014 by the local Chief Superintendent.

A two day ‘Driving Ambition’ event for S6 pupils and support to deliver ‘Bikeability’ to approximately 97% of schools (3000+ pupils) each year is no longer provided.

Performance reporting in regards to road safety has changed since the 1st April 2013 to reflect the priorities endorsed by the Local Authority through the Policy and Resources Committee. Road crime objectives are the main indicators and road safety measures have been included to enhance the assessment of the priorities.
• Objectives and performance reflect aims to increase detection rates for various driving offences: increases in detection by 169% for both mobile phone and seat belt offences, and a 92.8% increase in the detection of speeding offences between April-Sep 2012 and 2013.
• Fewer road safety indicators are now reported: some have been combined, such as number of adults killed and seriously injured (same for children) and some have been removed, such as number of children slightly injured.

4. Public Counter Provision
Police Scotland has carried out a review of its Public Counter Service Provision within divisions across Scotland. Within Aberdeenshire it is proposed that:
• two stations no longer provide a public counter service (Aboyne and Portsoy)
• four stations reduce their public counter service (Banff, Ellon, Inverurie and Peterhead)
• two stations are increasing their public counter service provision (Ballater, Banchory)

Full details of these proposals are available in the consultation paper that went to Policy and Resources Committee on 14 November 2013.
The consultation on Public Counter Closures ended officially on the 31st October 2013.

5. Shire Street Sports
In partnership with the former Grampian Police, Aberdeenshire Council runs an initiative aimed at improving youth participation in sports with the aim to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

Community Beat Officers have been involved with this project since its inception. There has been a reduction in participation from Police Scotland since the 1st April 2013, although there is still a commitment to contribute to this initiative.

6. Domestic Violence
Procedures for dealing with domestic abuse have evolved considerably over recent times and Police Scotland is committed to providing a robust victim centred approach. Responses to perpetrators have also changed whereby swift, decisive action will be taken to conclude enquiries and place perpetrators before the courts.

Police Scotland has introduced Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing (MARAC) and Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC) processes. Furthermore, a Domestic Abuse Investigation Unit has been created within B division (Aberdeenshire and Moray). The unit has a two pronged approach to domestic abuse. The first area incorporates the role of the Domestic Abuse Liaison Officer who is responsible for monitoring all reported domestic abuse incidents, including risk assessment of the victim and family and appropriate safety planning and any appropriate referrals to support organisations. The second area is the investigation area which has responsibility for routinely targeting prolific high tariff violent and serial perpetrators, ensuring they are held accountable for their actions.

7. Scotland Policing Performance Framework (SPPF)
An annual report summarising the performance of the eight legacy police forces up until 31st March 2013 was published on 4th November 2013. It indicates that the Scottish Policing Authority (SPA) is working with SPPF to develop a new national framework for performance reporting. This will allow the SPA to monitor performance against the yearly objectives as well as assessing the trends pre and post reform.

It will align a range of existing indicators with a selection of indicators selected from the Scottish Government’s four Strategic Police Priorities and the Seven Strategic Objectives for Policing. As this suggests, the methods and indicators used for reporting on police performance will be changing. Some of these changes provide additional information, not previously reported, which is welcomed Evidence of these changes can be seen when comparing the SPFF reporting style used by Grampian Police and the Police Scotland report to the Local Authority Scrutiny Board (LASB):

- More detail has been provided on the types of crimes and offences being recorded/detected to the LASB. Previous reports reported figures by Crime Group 1-7 with no information on specific crime types. New reporting structure is now orientated around a number of Police Scotland’s priorities and includes indicators relating specifically to the main objectives within these priorities.
- Additional detail is provided in relation to ‘emergency response time’ performance. Legacy reports provided one average response time. Current
reports provide a total response time with a breakdown of information including how long it takes Police Scotland to: create an incident on the system, identify the availability of resources and the time taken for resources to reach the scene once deployed.

- A number of police performance indicators, previously reported, are not included in the LASB report:
  - Serious and Organised Crime indicators including drug related offences and details of counter-terrorism briefings delivered to communities
  - Number of children and young people involved in criminal activity and those being diverted to early and effective intervention processes
  - Number of direct police measures used (i.e. antisocial behaviour fixed penalty notices/formal adults warnings)
  - User Satisfaction Survey data (as required by the Scottish Government) historically reported on satisfaction with: initial Police contact, the actions taken to resolve an enquiry, being kept adequately informed, treatment by staff, and the overall way Grampian Police dealt with a matter
  - Staffing measures were previously included in reporting from Grampian Police and are omitted from the LASB paper, including:
    - Headcount and Full Time Equivalent counts of Police Officers, Police Staff, cadets and Special Constables
    - Financial expenditure on salaries, operating costs and capital including expenditure per resident

8. Future Assessment
The Justice Sub-Committee on Policing has put out a call for views on whether the newly merged Police Scotland has been good for local communities. The call for view closed at 5pm Friday 10 January 2014. Currently, over 20 written responses have been made available to the public a number of which are from individuals in the Grampian area.

Aberdeenshire Council will be monitoring the outcome of this consultation and continuing its own investigation into the impact of the changes on partnership working and performance.

Aberdeenshire Council
27 January 2014