Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Impact of police reform on local policing

Written submission from Councillor Frederick Hall

Complaint regarding the proposed reduction in police supervisory cover in Oban, Lorne & the Isles

I wish to complain about the unjustifiable proposed reduction in supervisory cover in Argyll & Bute. I also want to draw the Justice Division’s attention to the flaws in Police Scotland’s Resource Allocation Model, which in my view appear to be based on putting officers where they can best get positive results for their in my opinion target led policing model (as opposed to the traditional Scottish Community based preventative patrol policing model). I would also draw to your attention that Police Scotland are in my opinion based on information given to me by the public and police officers pursuing a target led policing model in relation to Fixed Penalty Tickets in particular. Police Scotland in my view is pursuing a policy of reducing rural policing cover and a target led policing culture and that pursuit of targets would appear to be the primary factor in the resource allocation model. It is my considered opinion as a former police officer of 31 years police service and a former member of the Strathclyde Police Authority that Police Scotland has abandoned the virtues of the traditional Scottish based policing model of guard, watching and patrolling in order to prevent crimes to one based on the relentless pursuit of targets particularly in relation to Fixed Penalty Tickets. It would also appear that the pursuit of targets has led to the demise of the long standing culture of discretion that used to be enshrined in Scottish policing. However the main purpose of this letter is to complain about the proposal to reduce police supervisory cover in Oban, Lorne & the Isles to the rank of Inspector.

Councillors and citizens in Argyll & Bute were promised that the introduction of Police Scotland would not lead to a centralisation of resources and the reduction of policing cover, yet that is what is happening. The cut in supervisory Police Scotland are contemplating would result in Oban, Lorne & the Isles along with Mid-Argyll and Kintyre having less supervisory cover than a Sub Divisional Office in Glasgow.

How can the Scottish Police Authority, Police Scotland, the Chief Constable or for that matter the Justice Minister justify this?

The proposed loss of a chief inspector in Oban, Lorne & Isles will have the following impact factors.

1. Historically the chief inspector dealt with complaints against the Police a lot of which were resolved locally, who is going to undertake that role now?
2. It has been reported in the press that Police Scotland has seen a reduction in the number of senior experienced constables for a variety of reasons. Who is going to take on the chief inspector’s role of enforcing policing standards across Oban, Lorne & Isles?
3. It was the chief inspector’s role to monitor domestic violence incidents in Oban, Lorne & the Isles who is going to take over that role?
4. Oban is a major transport hub with over 725,000. Passengers going through the ferry terminal every year. It also has a host of key infrastructure facilities such as the Cruachan Dam & NATS Radar facility. Do Police Scotland and the Chief Constable really believe that a policing area as large and diverse as Oban, Lorne & the Isle and Mid Kintyre & the Isles can run with a command structure similar to that of Partick Police Office?

5. What are the key points in Police Scotland’s Resource Allocation Model that justify reducing the command structure in a geographic area that is larger than some nations, is it the relentless pursuit of target led policing and concentrating staff in areas where targets are easily met as opposed to a resource allocation model based around the traditional method of community based preventative policing?

The Justice Minister, Scottish Police Authority, Chief Constable Sir Stephen House and the Police Commander for Argyll and Bute Chief Supt Barry MacEwan have all stated that the introduction of Police Scotland would not lead to a reduction in service or staff. I find it difficult to square the above commitment with the proposed action to have a rank structure in Oban, Lorne & the Isles and Mid-Argyll & the Isles where the highest rank will be an Inspector.

Why should an area with the geographic and logistical challenges of Argyll & Bute and the lack of mutual aid be subject to cuts in supervisory staff that has no logic to it whatsoever?

I would add that I would like this letter to be viewed as an official complaint and I would like a written reply to the points I have raised.

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