Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Impact of police reform on local policing

Written submission from Bute Community Council

Letter to Police Scotland: review of local management structure

Thank you for your recent letters regarding the Traffic Warden Review, Public Counter Service Provision and the Review of Local Management Structures. No issues were raised at the recent Bute Community Council meeting with the proposals set out in the first two topics, however serious concerns were raised about the proposed allocation of resources set out in your review of local management structures.

Events of January 2012 when the island was cut off due to the storms remain fresh in the minds of local people, and therefore the proposal to remove the post of a locally based Inspector is perplexing. Members felt that if a similar such event occurred, resulting in a total loss of power, communication and transport; a senior officer with both the ability and the status to direct and allocate resources was necessary for the effective management of any crisis situation. It was suggested at our recent meeting that this responsibility would fall to the most senior retained fire officer if your current proposals were implemented.

Members felt that the current proposals would make them and the island more vulnerable, and used terms like ‘kick in the teeth’ and ‘feel abandoned’ when discussing them. We do appreciate that levels of crime are low on the island, however this of course must, at least in part, be attributed to effective policing by successive locally based inspectors and their officers, and the suitability of the current command structure.

I understand that in an email to Cllr I Strong on 1 October 2013 you said that “the choice to select Gordon in my new proposals is a decision I made based on his time on the island and the dates he would be looking at rotation to a new post.” This decision making process also gives cause for grave concern as it suggests that implementation of the new command structure is being based on what is operationally convenient for Police Scotland, and is not based on the needs of the individual communities that are being served.

Members were strongly of the opinion that if the new command structure for the area were to be implemented then Rothesay should be the last place to lose the inspector post. It was suggested that Helensburgh, being in close proximity to Dumbarton would create less logistical problems if they were served by the same inspector.

Bute Community Council very much value the work of Police Scotland in our community, and the support which we receive at our own community council meetings, but we would ask that you revisit these proposals, taking into account our island status and potential for isolation, and retain the post of inspector based at Rothesay Police Station.