Justice Committee

Fire and rescue service reform

Written submission from Midlothian Council Safer Communities Board

Midlothian Safer Communities Board welcomed the opportunity for direct scrutiny by elected members locally of fire services. They also play a key role in ensuring Fire services remain responsive to local needs after their reform by having in place arrangements for local scrutiny and engagement with these services. The Partnership has been pleased to note that reported fire fatalities are at their lowest level for years.

The local authority has worked closely with the Fire & Rescue Service on joint tasking, and on projects to reduce potential fire events through diversionary work with young people and Home Safety measures with other profiled priority groups.

The Community Safety Partnership is under pressure to deliver on the Community Safety priorities for 2014/2015 within the context of changing priorities from national organisations, a reduction in key resources, changes to the number of staff with a remit for community safety and a move away by some partners from prevention activity.

However Midlothian Council and Scottish Fire & Rescue are working together to strengthen integrated working where possible and work towards involving communities more in the work of the Community Safety Partnership.

1. Challenges:
   - future information sharing protocols.
   - road safety officers duties / responsibilities divested by Police will have to be taken over by other partners.
   - While Community Planning does not feature as a topic, it has been suggested in terms of the locality planning and joint resourcing is evidently necessary in the future planning and delivery of outcomes for communities.

2. Benefits:
   - Enhanced prevention activities locally.
   - Potential co-location prospects investigated.
   - Involvement into the delivery of projects within the Delivery Group (the Challenge project, Online Safety projects, road shows).
   - Contribution towards Anti Social Behaviour monitoring, Monthly Delivery Group and Tasking & Coordinating (TAC) weekly meetings.

Kevin Anderson
Head of Customer and Housing Services
Midlothian Council
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