

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Community Safety, Public Engagement and Equalities Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, on Thursday, 12 June 2014, at 10.00 a.m.

Present

Mr D Millar	Mr G Rimell
Ms J Campbell	Ms G Ross
Mr A Duffy	Mr G Ross
Mr M Finlayson	Mr R Saxon
Mr H Fraser	Dr A Sinclair
Mrs D MacKay	Ms J Slater
Mrs L Munro	Ms K Stephen (Substitute a.m.)
Mr M Reiss	Dr D Alston
Mr I Renwick	

Non-Members also present:

Mr A Baxter	Mr D Kerr
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr R Laird
Mr B Clark	Mr B Lobban
Mrs M Davidson	Mr T MacLennan
Mr J Gray	Mr F Parr
Mr R Greene	Ms M Smith

Officials in attendance:

Ms M Morris, Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development
Ms C McDiarmid, Head of Policy and Reform, Chief Executive's Office
Ms R MacKinnon, Equal Opportunities Officer, Chief Executive's Office
Mr J Bruce, Elections Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Mr C Stephen, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Mr R Evans, Head of Roads and Transport, Community Services
Ms F Palin, Head of Social Care, Health and Social Care Service
Mrs R Moir, Principal Administrator, Corporate Development Service
Mr S Taylor, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service

Also in attendance:

Chief Superintendent J Innes, Highland and Islands Divisional Commander, Police Scotland
Mr S Hay, Local Senior Officer for the Highland Area, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Mr G MacLeod, Head of Ambulance Services Highland, Scottish Ambulance Service
Mr R Iffla, Board Member, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Mr D Bennion, Partnership Manager, Northern Safety Camera Partnership
Ms G Gunn, Violence Against Women Training & Development Manager
Ms C Mechan, British Sign Language Interpreter (Item 3)

An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.

Mr D Millar in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence Liesgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mrs L Munro (a.m. only).

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest expressed.

Equalities Co-ionannachdan

3. New arrangements in the Council for communication support for people who are D/deaf, deaf-blind, deafened and hard of hearing Ullachaidhean ùra sa Chomhairle airson taic chonaltraidh do dhaoine a tha B/bodhar, bodhar-dall, air an claisneachd a chall no le cion claisneachd.

There had been circulated Report No. CPE14/14 dated 3 June 2014 by the Head of Policy and Reform providing an update to Members on the provision of Communication Support arrangements for deaf people to access Council and NHS services. A glossary of terms used in relation to deaf issues was tabled.

The Equal Opportunities Officer gave a verbal presentation which was signed by a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter. Building on previous arrangements with the NHS, the Council now employed a BSL interpreter in-house, whose services could be accessed by the NHS, High Life Highland, Citizen's Advice Bureaux and Highland Hospice. Booking services were also provided in-house by the Council's Service Centre. Activities supported included assistance at housing, money advice, hospital and GP appointments, or at longer meetings. Members could request the service for meetings with their constituents. Signing could also be used for the translation of documents - BSL was a language in its own right, with its own grammar and structures that did not always align with English. There was also provision for note taking or lip reading. Early feedback was that the service was bedding in well and that demand had increased.

In discussion, Members drew attention to a range of difficulties caused by deafness and commented that sign language was a recognised language sitting within a cultural community. Services must therefore be provided to the community as well as individuals.

In response to points raised, Members were advised that:

- Whilst the greatest demand was in Inverness, use was also made of free-lance signers to provide support across the Highlands.
- Demand for and use of services was being monitored and the Deaf Community would be asked for feedback on services.
- As there was a wide spectrum of deafness, a variety of communication methods, including making use of new technology, were used – some of the Council's webpages had video clips using a signer.

- Guidance was being developed, and good tips on how to reduce communication problems (such as reducing external noise at meetings with people who were hard of hearing) were available through the Council's e-learning programme.
- The Council's commitment to providing information in Plain English should help to make documents more accessible; a local Deaf Advocacy Officer had proofed and amended revised documents about the new arrangement for Communication Support.
- The Deaf Forum would be involved in the Council's budget consultation.

The Committee **NOTED** the new arrangements and the information given and undertook to raise awareness of the service amongst constituents.

4. Violence Against Women - Presentation Fòirneart An Aghaidh Bhoireannach – Taisbeanadh

A presentation was given by Gillian Gunn, the Community Planning Partnership Violence Against Women Training & Development Manager, providing an update on Violence Against Women (VAW) Issues and partnership action.

Ms Gunn provided information on issues around VAW generally, including how it was defined, that it was social rather than biological in origin, that experiencing one form of abuse could result in increased vulnerability to experiencing another, and that, although men could also be subject to domestic abuse, the vast majority of victims were women, with the abuse also impacting on children. The main characteristics of VAW included tactics of control, humiliation and degradation, the abdication of responsibility by the abuser, and the attribution of blame to the woman.

She drew attention to what was being done to tackle VAW, including national, long term and immediate outcomes and local measures. The key objectives of the Highland VAW workplan for 2013-16 were to: improve safety for those affected by VAW; improve services for those affected by VAW; take steps to prevent further VAW; and deal effectively with perpetrators of VAW. Partnership working was of crucial importance.

Ms Gunn provided many examples of the ways these objectives were being met, including: Multi-agency Risk Assessment conferences (MARAC) and other similar groups; improvements to statutory agency responses to sexual violence; the roll out of a prevention education pack within primary and secondary schools from Autumn 2014; and plans to establish VAW bystander intervention programmes in schools and university campuses across Highland over the next year. The feasibility of establishing a Cedar programme (available in other parts of Scotland) to support children and young people experiencing domestic abuse, and of introducing a voluntary referral scheme for perpetrators, were being investigated.

In discussion, Members strongly supported the work being carried out to address VAW. There was recognition that the issues were complex and could be compounded by substance misuse, mental health issues and previous experience. Violence of any sort was not acceptable; culture and religion were no excuse. Members emphasized the importance of joint working, education, changing attitudes and empowering women. In response to questions raised, Members were advised that education began at pre-school level, raising

awareness of gender stereotyping; new legislation was being prepared which would introduce a domestic abuse offence; and that further statistics on the breakdown of gender-based violence were available from the Police. An explanation of the bystander approach was provided.

Having commended and voiced support for the work being done, the Committee **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** that a report be brought to a future meeting of the Committee on the issue of violence against men.

5. Approach to Understanding Equalities Impacts Dòigh-obrach a Thaobh a Bhith a' Tuigsinn Buidhean Cho-ionannachdan

There had been circulated Report No. CPE15/14 dated 3 June 2014 by the Head of Policy and Reform informing Members of the range of methods being used to listen to the views of equalities groups for the budget consultation in 2014. The report also described the assessment questions the Council considered when conducting an impact assessment of any policy or plan.

The Equal Opportunities Officer summarised the main points of the report, including that focus groups would be provided for people who did not normally engage in consultations, including those in areas of deprivation. A Communities' Panel was also being set up. Following discussion with the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), additional groups would be invited to the sessions for representatives from mental health and learning disability groups.

An explanation having been given as to how the Public Sector Equalities Duty applied to the Council, the Committee **NOTED** the range of methods being used for gathering views for the budget consultation from people with protected characteristics; and **AGREED** that further information be provided to Area Committees to ensure that local representative groups were included in the new Communities' Panel.

6. Report on Actions from meeting with HUG and members of the Committee on 26 March 2014 Gnìomh A' Leantainn Seiminear Às Dèidh Coinneamh le Buidhnean Co- ionannachd

There had been circulated Report No. CPE16/14 dated 29 May 2014 by the Head of Policy and Reform highlighting that Members had agreed to hold sessions, following each meeting of this Committee, to hear the testimonies of local equality groups. The report summarised the issues that had arisen from a meeting with members of HUG (Action for Mental Health) which had taken place after the Committee on 26 March 2014. Issues raised by HUG had been noted and Directors had been asked to provide service responses, where appropriate, indicating activities already underway or proposals for new actions.

The Equal Opportunities Officer provided information on HUG's activities and drew attention to the positive relationship between HUG and the Council. Issues raised during the meeting had included: the importance of the creative arts, the need to challenge stigma and increase awareness, and the difficulties experienced in preserving confidentiality in rural areas. The Council would continue to talk to HUG, including involving them in the budget consultation, and would take forward points raised.

In discussion, Members who had attended the meeting commented that it had been very emotive, but also extremely useful and worthwhile. Attention was drawn to the bravery of people suffering from mental ill health, the need for communication, support, recognition and the reduction of stigma. The benefit of meeting directly with equalities groups was emphasised. HUG had practical solutions which the Council had taken on, but there was more to do, particularly with regard to reducing stigma and raising awareness.

The Committee **NOTED** the issues raised by HUG members, namely: the services they valued, the improvements they sought and how they would like to continue to engage; and **AGREED** the actions proposed in response, namely that:

- i. the issues raised by HUG would be considered by the Improvement Group for Adults with Mental Ill health and the Improvement Group for Children and Young People affected by Mental Ill Health, with the issues feeding into their work plans;
- ii. the Council's approach to responding to Welfare Reform changes would include some additional targeted advice and support through HUG (currently under discussion with HUG);
- iii. HUG would be invited to form a focus group as part of the Council's budget consultation from mid-September 2014; and
- iv. further awareness raising sessions would be organised with HUG, to involve the Council's senior management, including all Heads of Service, on the service issues people with mental ill health faced and how the Council could respond sensitively.

Public Engagement Com-pàirt Phoblach

7. Highland Elections – Encouraging Participation Taghaidhean na Gàidhealtachd – A' Brosnachadh Com-pàirteachas

There had been circulated Report No. CPE17/14 dated 2 June 2014 by the Elections Manager providing Members with an up-date of recent elections activity aimed at encouraging participation in elections.

The Elections Manager drew attention to the main points in the report, including information on recent by-elections and community council elections, and that the turn-out in Highland for the recent European Elections had, at 36.3%, been higher than anticipated. It was thought that the early issue of postal votes had contributed to the latter, with 20,000 postal votes being returned out of 33,000 posted. He also highlighted that letters would be posted to around 4,000 young people who would be aged between 16 and 18 years on 18 September, informing them that they would be eligible to vote at the Scottish referendum, and providing them with information about postal voting.

Points raised in discussion included:

- That the use being made of social media and the actions being taken by schools were welcomed; it was hoped these would raise awareness of and interest in democracy amongst young people; patterns of established voting at an early age were likely to continue.

- Young people who might be leaving home at the end of the summer should be encouraged to sign up for a postal vote.
- Whilst the reasons people did not vote were not known, these were understood to include not knowing how to vote.
- There was a need to stimulate interest and participation in Community Councils - numbers of community councillors appeared to be decreasing and a radical re-think might be required; Community Councils were the voice of the community; the remit of the Committee included encouraging participation in all elections.
- It would be useful, towards the end of the Council's term, to evaluate how successful actions to encourage voter turn-out had been, and what progress had been made.

The Elections Manager having advised anyone wishing a postal vote for the Scottish Referendum to apply very soon, as voting papers would be posted out in mid-August, the Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the ongoing work to encourage participation in elections in Highland; and
- ii. a suggestion that, at a future date, the Committee consider how participation in Community Councils might be encouraged.

The Committee also **AGREED** that a report be brought towards the end of the term of the Council on the outcome of the actions taken by the Council to encourage participation in elections.

8. Highland Public Services Partnership Performance Board Geàrr-chunntas – Bòrd Com-pàirteachas Seirbheisean Poblach na Gàidhealtachd

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** minutes of meeting of the Highland Public Services Partnership Performance Board held on 6 March 2014, which had been approved by that Board at its meeting on 5 June 2014.

9. Revision to Community Benefit Policy Ath-sgrùdadh air Poileasaidh Buannachd Coimhearsnachd

There had been circulated Report No CPE18/14 dated 29 May 2014 by the Acting Head of Community and Democratic Engagement revising Highland Council Community Benefit policy.

The Ward Manager, Aird and Loch Ness, covered the main points of the report, explaining the reasons that changes to the Council's Policy were being proposed, including the need to align with Scottish Government policy. He highlighted the success of the policy to date – it had been instrumental in fixing £5,000/Kw as the industry standard for community benefit, and had established a methodology for apportioning community benefit fairly amongst communities affected by a windfarm.

The revised Policy set out four guiding principles: developing community plans in order to guide expenditure; investing in projects which would generate sustainable income for communities; investing in service provision and asset management and acquisition; and community benefit being available to local communities and to communities across Highland.

In response to questions raised, the Ward Manager gave an assurance that Council officers were in regular contact with their counterparts at other Authorities; other bodies used Highland Council's Policy to inform their own.

The Committee **NOTED** that information on actions being taken by other Councils in relation to offshore wind energy policies would be emailed to Committee Members and that an update would be brought to a future meeting.

- * The Committee **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to the Council that it approve the revised Highland Council Community Benefit Policy.

Community Safety Com-pàirt Phoblach

10. Improvement Plan for Member Scrutiny and Engagement Plana Leasachaidh airson Sgrùdadh is Conaltradh Bhall

There had been circulated Report No. CPE19/14 dated 3 June 2014 by the Head of Policy and Reform providing an update of progress against the improvement plan, outlining the actions completed since the Committee's previous meeting in March 2014.

The Head of Policy and Reform summarised the report and highlighted that actions identified by Members at previous workshops were all now either completed or had become routine business that would continue for scrutiny as part of the routine and ongoing business of the Committee, namely:

- continuously improving the quarterly performance report for Police Scotland, as requested through the Committee
- continuously improving the quarterly performance report for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, as requested through the Committee
- sharing practice with the Island Authorities on Member engagement and scrutiny
- considering further shared services opportunities

Future activity included scrutiny of Police and Fire and Rescue performance by the Area Committees, and that further Member workshops would be arranged in advance of any inspection activity.

In discussion, the need to ensure District Partnerships worked well was raised, and Members were reminded that they were able to request items to be added to the Partnership agenda. The position regarding the future of the Community Safety Action team in Caithness in relation to the District Partnership was not yet known, but as the aim of such Partnerships was to improve how things worked, it was likely that an acceptable solution would be found.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and the information given, and that outstanding actions in the improvement plan were either all completed or had become part of the routine business of the Committee, as set out above.

11. Fire and Rescue Service - Quarterly Performance Report Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn – Aithisg Dèanadais Ràitheil

There had been circulated Report No. CPE20/14 dated 1 June 2014 by the Local Senior Officer for Fire and Rescue, together with accompanying quarterly performance report (QPR) for Quarter 4, 2013/14, providing detail on Fire and Rescue Service performance across a range of Intervention, Prevention and Protection activities, in line with set target delivery for 2013/14. The report also highlighted the recent investment in the asset centre in Inverness, including upgraded workshops and stores, and the key outcomes from the recent HM Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI) report following an examination of Equal Access to National Capacity.

In speaking to the report, the Local Senior Officer drew attention to progress being made against performance indicator targets, and described actions being taken to reduce risk, including engagement with: partners to identify vulnerable persons and so target Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV); premises holders to reduce the number of false alarms; and the Scottish Wildfire Forum. Recruitment was ongoing, particularly in more rural areas, with home-based women being encouraged to consider becoming retained fire fighters to improve daytime hours cover. Health and safety reporting and skills training remained high priorities.

He also referred to the findings of the recent HMFSI audit, which showed that the Isle of Skye compared very favourably with other similar islands in terms of HFSVs – the commitment and dedication of the firefighters having been recognised – and highlighted that the investment in workshops and stores at Inverness would allow vehicles in the wider north area, e.g. Moray, also to be serviced in Inverness. The potential also to service large vehicles from other public bodies, including the Highland Council, was being investigated.

The Chairman reported that, through an engagement exercise, the Retained Firefighter Service would be reviewed over the coming 18 months, including looking at issues of recruitment and availability, with a view to redesigning the service to make best use of the resources available. It was hoped that, as part of the exercise, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Board would meet in Inverness, and that there would be an opportunity for Members' involvement.

Points raised in general discussion included a welcome by Members for the positive report, commendation of the officers in Skye for their HFSV work, and comment that stretch targets were a good idea. In answer to questions raised, confirmation was given that:

- All referrals from partners were provided with a HFSV; there were trained officers at each of the 62 stations and 5 dedicated advocates across Highland; Members were also encouraged to let the Fire and Rescue Service know of anyone they thought might benefit from a HFSV.
- There was a standard benchmark for fitness across Scotland for all fire fighters; the Service routinely worked with any officer who required support to meet the standard to return them to full fitness.
- The Scottish Ambulance Service also took part in the Driving Ambition Scheme, and parents of victims shared their experience at separate events.
- The list of legislative fire safety visits had decreased substantially from previous years as the backlog of premises had been addressed.

- The number of enforcement and prohibition notices aligned with what would be expected for the Highland area and the level of activity.
- Where deliberately-started fires followed a seasonal pattern, the Service implemented its seasonal thematic action plan to address seasonal events, and took appropriate preventative action, such as working with schools and Anti-Social Behaviour groups prior to the school holidays.
- Low numbers of crew did not necessarily correspond with low availability of the unit, as this depended on the particular community – recruitment was focussed on where there were gaps, to address availability issues.
- Retained duty contracts could be agreed for any period between the minimum commitment of 90hrs/wk availability and the full retained contract of 120hrs/wk; the SFRS was willing to work with any future employee to ensure operational cover within the area.

With reference to the false alarm figures reported (34% of all call-outs), Members invited the Local Senior Officer to advise of any action the Council could take to support the Service in reducing these.

Mr R Iffla, Board Member, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, whose remit included monitoring the way the Committee scrutinised fire and rescue services in the Highlands, provided further information on the forthcoming Scottish Retained Duty System review. The reasons for this included the change in demographics of how people lived and worked; the practice of paying staff for turn-outs being at odds with the aims to reduce incidents; and the danger that some communities would think they had fire cover because there was a station in the locality, whereas in reality, due to crew unavailability, this was not the case. He also drew attention to plans to increase fitness (VO₂) standards over the subsequent two years.

The Committee **NOTED** the information given and:

- i. the service delivery and performance information contained within the report and accompanying QPR for Quarter 4, 2013-2014; and
- ii. that the Retained Firefighter Service would be reviewed over the coming 18 months.

12. Scottish Ambulance Service Report Aithisg Seirbheis Charbadan-eiridinn na h-Alba

In accordance with Standing Order 18, with the consent of the meeting, Item 13 on the agenda was taken at this point.

There had been circulated performance report by the Scottish Ambulance Service for the Highland area for the period November 2013 to May 2014, setting out statistics and commentary in relation to Accident and Emergency (A&E) activity and also Scheduled Care / Patient Transport Service performance.

In speaking to the report, Mr G MacLeod of the Scottish Ambulance Service drew attention to the 0.7% overall improvement between 2012/13 and 2013/14 in relation to Category A (life threatening) call response performance (from 69.4% to 70.1%); the rise in demand on the Service; and the number of vacancies currently in Highland. It was hoped that these would reduce before the end of the year. Shift patterns were being reviewed to seek to optimise resource deployment. Work was also ongoing with partners to identify alternative

pathways of care. He also highlighted the recent successful demonstration of the use during long-distance ambulance transfer of diagnostic quality Ultrasonic images in cases of cerebrovascular accident of the brain.

Mr MacLeod's responses to Member comments/questions included:

- He was optimistic regarding the filling of vacancies in Fort William and Thurso; rural areas could, however, be more difficult.
- Where long journeys were involved, the Scheduled Care service could more readily service hospital appointments in the middle of the day; however, every effort was made to fit other arrangements where practical.
- The Scheduled Care service currently operated Monday to Friday only.
- There was provision within the Scheduled Care service for assessing and prioritising transport demands and every effort was made to match capacity with demand; work was ongoing to try to improve matters.
- Lack of alternative out-of-hours cover in some areas increased the demand on the Ambulance Service, as did the inability of some smaller hospitals to treat certain cases.

During discussion, improvement in the Scheduled Care service in Skye was welcomed. Attention was drawn to the potential of rolling out the concept of community wardens, operating in some rural communities, whereby volunteers would sit overnight with vulnerable individuals, with a view to decisions on their care being taken during more flexible daylight hours.

Having heard Mr MacLeod confirm that a further breakdown of the figures on A&E incidents could be provided, the Committee **NOTED** the report.

13. Scottish Safety Camera Programme Review Response to Consultation Document

Sgrìobhainn Cho-chomhairle Riaghaltas na h-Alba – Co-chomhairle Ath-bhreithneachail a thaobh Prògram Chamarathan Sàbhailteachd na h-Alba

In accordance with Standing Order 18, with the consent of the meeting, Item 14 on the agenda was taken at this point.

There had been circulated Report No CPE24/14 dated 29 May 2014 by the Director of Community Services providing the joint response made by the Northern Safety Camera Partnership, on behalf of its members, including the Highland Council, to the recent Government consultation on the Scottish Safety Camera Programme Review.

The Committee **HOMOLOGATED** the joint response to the Scottish Safety Camera Programme Review consultation, as appended to the report.

14. Police Reports Aithisgean Poilis

- Highland Local Police Area – Armed Policing Operations
Sgìre Poilis Ionadail na Gàidhealtachd – Obraichean Obair-phoilis Armaichte**

In accordance with Standing Order 18, with the consent of the meeting, Item 12(iii) on the agenda was taken at this point.

There had been circulated Report No. CPE23/14 dated 30 May 2014 by the Divisional Commander for Police providing an overview on Armed Policing Operations within the Highland and Islands Division.

The report explained that, historically, Firearms capability within the Division had been provided by operational officers trained in the Police use of Firearms and carrying out that function on an ancillary basis to their primary role. In 2004 dedicated Armed Response officers and vehicles had been established within the Road Policing unit; these officers had carried weaponry in specialist vehicles in order that deployment could be on a more spontaneous level. In February 2013 the two functions had been separated and the Armed Policing operations unit had been set up in Inverness.

The report also explained that every Firearms incident was the subject of a structured debriefing process, through which the delay in armed officers' deployment to incidents had continually been identified as a strategic risk and therefore, with a view to mitigating that risk, the decision had been taken that, from 1 March 2013, the small number of specially trained Armed Response officers would be given standing authority to carry a handgun and taser.

In the first year of Police Scotland, 115 incidents within the Highland and Islands Division had been considered to have the potential to require an armed response; of that number 41 incidents had been given full authorisation. A total of 1502 Armed Response officer hours had been spent attending firearms incidents. When not attending Firearms incidents, the Armed Response Unit had detected 2313 crimes and offences not related to firearms or weapons use, and there had been 44 incidents of arrest on warrant.

The report also provided data on officer training and firearms certification in the Highlands and Islands.

In speaking to the report and/or in discussion, the Divisional Commander emphasised:

- the delays in response of typically some 20 minutes arising from the deployment process required under the former policy
- the small number of officers involved – a sergeant and 16 constables
- that the weapon involved was a handgun carried on the person, at the hip - media images of officers carrying machine guns distorted the reality
- that while the relevant officers now permanently carried a handgun, its use still required the authorisation of a tactical firearms commander
- that on no occasion had a police firearm been discharged
- that the relatively high number of properly checked firearms certificates held in Highland was a reflection of its rural character and not regarded as a threat
- that some legal weapons could, however, fall into criminal hands
- that the majority of weapons incidents in Highland involved knives or similar weapons rather than firearms – these could nonetheless merit an armed response.

While some Members indicated their acceptance of the change in tactics, the majority of Members expressed strong disquiet and a preference for a return to

the policy of firearms being held securely within an armed response vehicle. Points raised in discussion included:

- Routine arming of even a small number of officers represented a fundamental and disproportionate change in direction; this was of legitimate public concern, and should be subject to open and transparent debate.
- It was accepted that it was appropriate for properly trained and equipped armed response officers to attend high risk incidents; however, carrying firearms at minor incidents could cause unnecessary fear and alarm.
- The perceived unarmed status of UK policing helped to foster closer community relations, particularly in Highland, and was valued by the public and envied in other parts of the world.
- Such a change of approach would be damaging, undermining public trust and, potentially, harming Highland's justified public image as a low crime area, attractive for tourism and investment.
- Carrying weapons could put officers at risk of escalation of criminal behaviour with a view to matching police capacity, and/or pre-empting police action, and/or claiming self-defence.
- Officers responding to a high risk incident would be at significant risk unless wearing their full protective gear – an element of delay to allow for this would therefore surely continue to be built into any armed response; in such event, therefore, there appeared to be little net difference justifying a change in policy on this ground.
- Other “less lethal” options such as Tasers or dogs might prove more effective deterrents, as offenders would be more likely to believe that they would be used, but might doubt whether a police firearm would be.
- This was a national policy being imposed from the centre and reflected neither local conditions nor local wishes.

Following discussion, the Committee **NOTED** that, this being an operational matter, the Divisional Commander would report the Committee's comments to the Police Scotland management team; and **AGREED** to write to the Chief Constable of Police Scotland and to the Scottish Police Authority to express the Committee's concerns as to the implementation in Highland of a Standing Authority for armed response officers to carry a loaded weapon on the body at all times.

**ii. Performance Against the Highland Council Local Policing Plan
Dèanadas Mu Choinneamh Plana Obair-phoilis Ionadail Chomhairle
na Gàidhealtachd**

In accordance with Standing Order 18, with the consent of the meeting, Item 12(i) on the agenda was taken at this point.

There had been circulated Report No. CPE21/14 dated 30 May 2014 by the Divisional Commander for Police providing an update on the progress with reference to the objectives outlined in the draft Highland 2014-2017 Policing Plan.

In speaking to the report, the Divisional Commander highlighted the downward trend in crime figures and in fatal road traffic incidents, and drew attention to a particular campaign in May 2014 aimed at reducing motor cycle collisions. He

also welcomed the imminent recruitment of 20 new officers into the Highlands and Islands.

His responses to Member comments/questions included:

- Safety Cameras were generally positioned at a moderate distance to either side of crash cluster sites, with a view to slowing traffic and reducing the collision risk; he would circulate to Members a note of road traffic accidents over the previous 10 years.
- Every effort was made to keep station premises open to the public during their scheduled opening hours; he would pass further information on station staffing numbers to Cllr A Baxter.
- He would investigate comments made suggesting officer stress and low morale in the Lochaber area.
- He had no plans to introduce random sniffer dog drugs searches.
- Every effort would be made to maintain flexibility in managing/policing local and charitable events.
- He would bring reports to the next Committee meeting on road fatalities and road closures over the past year; and on call responses over that period, to include a review of 999 response times and the operation of the 101 telephone number.

In response to concern expressed as to a number of recent drugs-related deaths, the Head of Policy and Reform suggested that a report also be brought to the Committee on the work of the Drugs and Alcohol Partnership, now to be chaired by the Divisional Commander.

Following discussion the Committee **NOTED**:

- i. progress made against the objectives set within the draft Highland Local Policing Plan 2014-2017;
 - ii. the new performance reporting format; and
 - iii. the proposals for future reporting.
- iii. Highland Local Police Area – Divisional Update**
Sgìre Poilis Ionadail na Gàidhealtachd – Fios as Ùr a thaobh na Roinne

In accordance with Standing Order 18, with the consent of the meeting, Item 12(ii) on the agenda was taken at this point.

There had been circulated Report No. CPE22/14 dated 30 May 2014 by the Divisional Commander for Police providing an update in relation to Road Safety, Doorstep Crime Campaign - Operation Monarda 2 and Licensing, all in response to concerns raised / interest expressed at previous meetings.

In speaking to the report he highlighted the reduction in road fatalities and in drink driving numbers, the officer numbers allocated to roads policing and work carried out on identifying priority routes and crash cluster sites; partnership work on doorstep crime; and the success of recent Licensing Unit activity and the positive reaction of licensees.

During discussion, concern was expressed that a more robust approach was needed to enforcement of illegal parking.

The Committee **NOTED** the Divisional Update.

**15. Partnership Report on Anti-Social Behaviour
Aithisg Chom-pàirteachais – Aithisg Bhliadhna mu Dhol-a-mach Mì-
shòisealta**

There had been circulated Report No. CPE25/14 dated 2 June 2014 by Director of Community Services providing an update in relation to the Highland Antisocial Behaviour Strategy and a summary of activity across partner agencies which had responsibilities for managing specific issues relating to antisocial behaviour. The report also set out the revised arrangements for Antisocial Behaviour Strategy under the Safer Highland Structure.

Due to time pressures, the Committee **AGREED** to defer this item until its next meeting.

The meeting ended at 3.40 p.m., having adjourned for lunch between 1.05 p.m. and 1.50 p.m.