

**The Highland Council**  
**Communities and Partnerships Committee**  
**9 February 2017**

Agenda Item	14
Report No	CP 08/17

**Scottish Police Authority – Annual Review of Policing**

**Report by the Acting Head of Policy**

**Summary**

This report outlines a draft response to the Scottish Police Authority's Annual Review of Policing. Members are asked to review the draft response, consider other areas for inclusion and agree a final response for submission to the SPA.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 The Scottish Police Authority (SPA) undertakes an annual review into policing in Scotland which is reported to the Scottish Parliament. They have written to all scrutiny committees seeking the views and experience of policing locally to contribute to this review.
- 1.2 There are 4 key areas that the SPA are seeking views on:
- Satisfaction with policing's engagement with communities and with the local authority since April 2016, on local priority setting;
  - The effectiveness of Police Scotland's local reporting against these priorities over the course of 2016/17 in relation to supporting local scrutiny;
  - The effectiveness of Police Scotland's engagement with the scrutiny committee and support for local scrutiny;
  - Examples of good practice or suggestions for improvement.
- 1.3 A draft response is set out at section 2. Members are asked to review the draft response, consider other areas for inclusion and agree a final submission to the SPA.

**2. Draft Response to SPA Annual Review**

- 2.1 The proposed response to the SPA is set out below under the four enquiry headings. This is based on comments received from Members but also general comments and feedback on policing related matters over the course of the last year. The focus from the SPA is on the relationship at a local level, which forms the majority of the comments however, it also takes the opportunity to note issues raised by Members in relation to national policing matters and the relationship with Police Scotland nationally.

## 2.2 ***Satisfaction with policing's engagement with communities and with the local authority since April 2016, on local priority setting***

The current local Highland Policing Plan was developed following engagement across Highland and through a variety of mechanisms. This included consultation with local groups including Community Councils and Resident Associations, the general public, Local Authority Councillors, MSPs and MPs, and local community planning partners. A survey of residents was conducted and a series of ward forums held to specifically discuss local priorities.

In addition to the Highland plan, 22 multi-member ward community policing plans have also been developed which respond directly to local needs and demands. Members across the Local Authority have had the opportunity in input into the development of these plans and set the priorities for policing within the Highland area.

The focus from Police Scotland over the last year has not been on priority setting but consolidation and reporting against existing priorities in advance of the development of new priorities and a revised local policing plan during 2017. The introduction of the new online engagement tool YourViewCounts in April 2016 has been a welcome addition to existing engagement mechanisms.

Overall, local engagement from Police Scotland is welcomed across our communities. In addition to formal scrutiny arrangements, which are discussed in more detail below, local officers attend Community Council meetings, local ward forums/public meetings and are fully engaged within our new Community Planning arrangements. There has been some concern expressed more recently regarding the consistency of attendance at Community Council meetings. Whilst it is recognised that this must be balanced against operational policing matters, the visibility of our local police and the connection that they have with our communities, is a core strength of the local organisation.

## 2.3 ***The effectiveness of Police Scotland's local reporting against these priorities over the course of 2016/17 in relation to supporting local scrutiny***

Police Scotland attends each of the four scrutiny committees held annually and provide comprehensive reports against the local area priorities. More significantly however, the local Commander makes himself available at these meetings to respond to questions, comments and concerns from Members. This detailed questioning results in extremely effective scrutiny of policing across the area.

This responsiveness is also reflected in the approach taken by local officers attending Highland Council Local Committees that enables scrutiny at a local area level. Further comments on this are reflected below.

#### 2.4 ***The effectiveness of Police Scotland's engagement with the scrutiny committee and support for local scrutiny***

The experience of engagement with Police Scotland locally has been very positive. As outlined above, the local Commander attends each of the scrutiny committees held and is open and frank with Members regarding areas of concern, and responsive to questions and enquiries. The local Commander and his team will make themselves available to Members beyond the scrutiny committee setting to allow further discussion on areas of concern or interest.

One particular area of development over the course of the last year has been the introduction of police reporting at the 8 new Highland Council Local Committees. Localised reports are provided twice a year for each of the Local Committees. This reflects performance against local ward policing plans. Local officers, normally the Area Commander, are in attendance at these meetings and are able to provide full responses on local issues raised at these Committees. This has been an extremely positive development and enables strategic scrutiny to take place at the Communities and Partnerships committee but for more local matters to be discussed within an appropriate forum. The positive contribution and engagement from Police Scotland in these local committees has been welcomed by Members and demonstrates effective support for local scrutiny.

#### 2.5 ***Examples of good practice or suggestions for improvement***

*North Scrutiny Chairs Forum:* The introduction of a North Scrutiny Chairs Forum has been a positive development to enable the sharing of good practice in scrutiny and support engagement of the chairs for the north with the national boards. Local Senior Officers have been in attendance which has aided liaison and engagement.

*COSLA Policy Scrutiny Conveners Forum:* Although early in development, initial feedback is that this forum, as a mechanism for engagement between Scrutiny Chairs and the SPA, will assist in raising national policing issues and concerns that have been identified by Scrutiny Committees.

*Community Planning Partnership Engagement:* The Community Empowerment Act 2015 has changed the nature of community planning and with it the role of Police Scotland as a lead partner along with 4 other public agencies. The Local Commander has been supportive and constructive about this change and has been instrumental in developing new partnership support arrangements, in which Police Scotland play a core role.

#### 2.6 ***Final Comment***

The experience of engagement in Highland with Police Scotland in relation to local scrutiny arrangements has been extremely positive. However, significant concerns do remain regarding the national decision to relocate the police control room to the central belt and the impact this may have. It is extremely important that positive engagement takes place around all policing matters, both local and national and it is hoped that the implementation of the SPA Governance Review will assist in ensuring this takes place going forward.

### 3. Next Steps

- 3.1 Members are asked to review the draft response and consider other areas for inclusion in order to feed back to the SPA.

### 4. Implications

- 4.1 Resource implications: There are no resource implications arising from the proposed response.
- 4.2 Legal and risk implications: Members have a legal duty to engage with and scrutinise the national services for police and fire and rescue.
- 4.3 Equalities, Gaelic, Climate Change implications: There are no new equalities, Gaelic or climate change implications arising from the proposed response.
- 4.4 Rural implications: the proposed response recognises the importance of Local Committee reporting which enables the differing policing challenges in rural parts of Highland to be discussed locally.

### 5. Recommendation

Members are asked to review the draft response, consider other areas for inclusion and agree a final response for submission to the SPA.

Designation: Acting Head of Policy

Date: 30 January 2017

Author: Alison Clark (01463 702512)