

## **Justice Sub-Committee on Policing**

### **Designation of local commanders**

#### **Written submission from Aberdeen City Council**

##### **The Aberdeen City Context**

Aberdeen is a unique place in Scotland. Though the City has benefited from the prosperity brought by the oil and gas industry, now that the rest of the UK economy is recovering from recession, Aberdeen is experiencing a decline due to the drop in the price of oil. This is compounded by pressures on infrastructure, connectivity, housing and skills. The effects of this include job losses, falling property prices and loss of custom.

Despite this decline, Aberdeen City continues to make a significant exchequer contribution to Scotland and the UK and this is expected to continue into the future. At a Scottish level, for example, almost 8% of Non-Domestic Rates was raised within Aberdeen in 2015/16.

Through our Regional Economic Strategy the City / Region is continuing to support the oil & gas industry, but also taking a more sustainable, diversified approach by attracting non-oil business.

The Council is committed to working in partnership, both with other organisations as well as directly with communities themselves, to support the people of Aberdeen to prosper, no matter their social circumstances, and to break a cycle of deprivation that is repeated generation after generation. We want Aberdeen to be a city where there is equality of outcomes and opportunities for all our children, irrespective of their circumstances. Investment in children is one of the best and most valuable long-term investments we can make. Investing shared resources to target prevention and early intervention for children and young people is central to tackling inequality and improving life chances.

The City Council is also leading the largest regeneration programme ever seen in Aberdeen to support vastly improved transport, connectivity and investment in the city centre.

##### **Justice Sub-Committee-Designation of Local Police Commanders**

Following the creation of Police Scotland, the local authority administrative areas of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire & Moray had their own designated local commander. A decision was made by Police Scotland that these 2 posts would be brought together and now we have one local commander effectively covering what had been the old Grampian Police region. The geographical land mass of the administrative area of Aberdeenshire and Moray Council is not unsubstantial and is in addition to a condensed urban city. The local commander must be challenged to cover that whole area. Aberdeen City Council is unaware of such mergers of local commanders having taken place anywhere else in Scotland. Aberdeen City Council viewed the decision to create a single division within the north east as so concerning,

and its resulting impacts as so significant, that an instruction was given from the Urgent Business Committee to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to seek an opinion on a judicial review. This emphasises the significance which the Council places on a single local commander for the city of Aberdeen, which is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city in Scotland. Whilst we would recognise the financial challenges being faced by Police Scotland, and this being the rationale for the creation of one commander here in the north east, the lack of spread across the rest of Scotland needs to be explained.

Our Local Commander is an active member of the Aberdeen City community planning partnership and is in fact the vice chair of the Partnership board. The Local Commander and his senior team have played an active role in the work of the partnership in developing its Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) along with the requirement to produce locality plans for our most deprived communities, both being requirements of the Community Empowerment Act 2016. The work on the LOIP and the locality plans has now provided a partnership framework to the Commander's local policing plan and we understand the intention is to align the local policing plan directly to the LOIP which is welcomed by the Partnership. It is recognised that the Local Commander has been effectively developing community policing and relevant performance information is considered through community planning and indicates significant positive results which have been gained from the strategy of partnership working.

The structure works effectively as long as Police Scotland provides the Local Commander with the freedom to develop and support localities with their own special commitment to community policing and local initiatives.

Of course, out with the Local Commander's control are those national policing decisions which are taken at the national board level. We would ask that the CPP partnership is given the opportunity to consider what impact, if any, such national decisions have on the improvement outcomes we have agreed within our LOIP.

The Local Commander is very diligent in reporting progress against the policing plan to our scrutiny committee within the Council's structures. The convener of this committee feels that the practice seems to be working quite well. The Reports are presented in a thematic form, as the committee requested, and have proven to be very informative, as are the Q and A sessions that are held regularly. There is a real emphasis on community participation, which the scrutiny committee recognises and appreciates.

Moving forward, if there is a call for evidence we, at Aberdeen City Council confirm that we would happily agree to take part.