

Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Designation of local commanders

Written submission from Dumfries and Galloway Council

I refer to your letter of 17 November 2016 and the request from the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing for an update on how the designation of local police commanders is working in practice.

Dumfries and Galloway Council enjoys the benefit of coterminous boundaries with Police Scotland V Division; in a large geographical and rural area this serves us well in terms of mutual areas of interest; identifying opportunities and tackling challenges. Understanding and responding to the specific needs of our local communities and the planning and provision of public sector services is essential for local policing and our Council to do our respective jobs well and, importantly, in partnership.

Changes in Police Scotland have had a significant impact on Dumfries and Galloway, through both a reduction in civilian staff and the removal of locally based services to local residents. There have also been several changes in local commanders in V Division since new national arrangements for Police, Fire and Rescue Services were implemented on 1 April 2013 and this has presented challenges in terms of continuity, leadership, planning and communication.

However, I am pleased to confirm that the appointment of our current local police commander has provided stability - and we hope that Police Scotland will ensure that this stability in post-holder continues - and our working relationship with the local police commander is consistently very good. Given the financial and demographic issues we face here in south west Scotland, it is essential that both organisations share information, bring our respective resources to the table and that we are proactive in terms of joint working to prevent and address crime and/or perception of crime.

The Chair of our Police, Fire and Rescue Sub Committee and my colleagues in the Council's Communities Directorate also meet with him regularly to discuss strategic and tactical issues, including the preparation of meeting agendas for our Sub Committee. Our local police commander attends and inputs to Sub Committee meetings and invites the Chair of the Sub Committee to attend V Division's continuous improvement monthly meetings. Elected Members on the Sub Committee have adapted to their changing role following police reform and the scrutiny role they perform is working well: to ensure this continues, it is important that the local police commander continues to liaise with us and provides us with useful and detailed performance reports on the delivery of the local Policing Plan. The Sub Committee enjoys a mutually respectful relationship with the local police commander and is appreciative of his ongoing invitation to discuss policing matters on an individual basis directly with him, and/or with other senior police personnel. This has been particularly relevant in the recent Police Scotland consultation process on the future of the local police estate.

Our local police commander is a member of the Dumfries and Galloway Strategic Partnership (our Community Planning Partnership) regularly attending and contributing to meetings and Partnership events. The aim of the Strategic Partnership is to work together 'to create an ambitious, prosperous and confident Dumfries and Galloway where people achieve their potential'. The commander is also a member of the Community Planning Executive Group, the remit of which includes the provision of advice and guidance to the Strategic Partnership in its work programme and activities. His contribution to these partnership groupings brings a wider perspective to the agenda, and vice-versa, and his continued input to the development of the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan is essential.

The local police commander is also a member of our Chief Officers Group for People Protection, which oversees the MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements), Child Protection, and Adult Protection agendas. This Group has a vital role in the partnership approach to prevention.

Continued robust relationships with our local police commander in the future must be supported by Police Scotland fully empowering the post-holder to carry out his/her local policing role and equipping them to be pro-active and responsive to local needs, local aspirations and to be knowledgeable about, and sensitive to, the local environment in which we are working to improve the quality of life for people in this region.

I trust that this information will be helpful to the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing and I look forward to hearing the outcome of the Sub-Committee's considerations.

Yours sincerely

Gavin Stevenson
Chief Executive