

Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Designation of local commanders

Written submission from Shetland Islands Council

It is the view of the Shetland Islands Council that the designation of local police commanders has, to date, been working well in Shetland. Engagement with the Local Police Commander, at all levels, has been very good. The Local Commander attends and actively engages in regular community planning and partnership meetings, opening up channels for effective and two way communications between local representatives and stakeholders and the police force.

The Local Commander has shown a commitment to engaging with the public through locally elected community representatives by ensuring regular police representation at local community council meetings to gather views and/or deliver updates on relevant issues and areas of concern.

We are satisfied that local concerns and information are reflected in local police plans and with the quarterly updates provided by the Local Commander to Shetland's police and fire scrutiny committee, the Shetland Community Safety and Resilience Board.

However, there is awareness locally that the effectiveness of current arrangements can largely be accredited to the individual currently in post. We would therefore suggest that good communication and people skills, enabling effective engagement with both community planning partners from across a broad range of agencies, and with the wider community, should be upheld by the Scottish Police Service as essential employment criteria.

In addition, the rank of the Local Commander is extremely important in relation to resilience in an islands situation. The Chief Inspectors that have held the post in Shetland have had the authority, knowledge and, very importantly, the experience to be able to respond efficiently and effectively, and with multi-agency partners to major incidents when supporting police officers were unable to get to Shetland either by air or sea because of severe weather.

It is felt that it is essential that the rank of the Local Commander is maintained at Chief Inspector level.

Yours faithfully

M J Boden
Chief Executive