

Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Designation of local commanders

Written submission from Western Isles Council

Thank you for your letter of 17 November 2016 on this subject; please accept my apologies for our slightly late reply.

The Comhairle welcomed, and continues to support, the appointment and identification of a local Commander with specific responsibility for our Council area as one of the best provisions of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012. The local Commander for the Western Isles has responsibility for the Highland Council, Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council areas and therefore is not local in the sense that s/he is not based within the Western Isles. Much depends, therefore, on the approach taken both by the Local Authority and the local Commander concerned, and the Comhairle was very well served and supported by the first local Commander for the Highlands and Islands area, Superintendent Julian Innes. A new local Commander for the same areas has now been appointed, and early signs are that the Comhairle and the Western Isles will receive a similar level of interest and support.

Consent for each appointment was sought from each of the four Councils, and that process gave an opportunity for discussion of expectations as to discharge of the local Commander's functions in each area.

In any Island community, it is the local Area Commander who is in the real operational sense our "local Commander", and working relationships at that level are very good indeed.

The practice of Scottish Fire and Rescue Service of appointing one local Commander for all three Islands Council areas, which shows particular sensitivity to the needs of islands communities, may also be of interest to your Sub Committee.

In summary, the Comhairle is content with the arrangements in practice, and supportive of the principle of the appointment of a local Commander with accountability for delivery of the Police Service in our area.

Please let me know if I can assist the Sub Committee in any further detail.

Malcolm Burr
Chief Executive
Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar
4 January 2017