

PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 27 October 2021. Minute of Meeting of the PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Stewart, the Depute Provost, Convener; Councillor Graham, Vice-Convener; and Councillors Lesley Dunbar, Allard, Greig, Henrickson, Houghton, MacGregor and Wheeler.

URGENT BUSINESS

1. The Convener advised that an Urgent Notice of Motion had been submitted by Councillor Houghton relating to Aberdeen Nightclub Safety Concerns, and in terms of Standing Order 12.9, she had accepted it onto the agenda.

At this juncture Councillor Allard made reference to the Committee agenda template (Notification of Meeting) and suggested that all agenda templates for hybrid committee meetings be amended to reflect that members may be able to participate remotely as well as attending the meeting in the Town House.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that the Urgent Notice of Motion by Councillor Houghton would be considered at item 7.1 on the agenda; and
- (ii) to note that the Chief Officer – Governance would ensure that all agenda templates for hybrid committee meetings are amended to reflect that members may be able to participate remotely.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. Members were requested to intimate any declarations of interest in respect of the items on today's agenda.

There were no declarations of interest intimated.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 23 JUNE 2021

3. The Committee had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 23 June 2021, for approval.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the minute as a correct record.

COMMITTEE PLANNER

4. The Committee had before it the Committee Business Planner prepared by the Chief Officer – Governance.

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The Convener sought confirmation whether a request from Councillor Wheeler to add a thematic report from Police Scotland relating to Road Safety, which would include reference to horse riders, cyclists and other vulnerable rural road users could be added to the planner. In response, the Divisional Commander indicated that he would liaise with the Road Safety Pan-Grampian Group in this regard, but also to determine whether a presentation would be more appropriate.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the explanations for the reporting delays relating to item 5 (Police Scotland - Thematic Report: Mental Health & Wellbeing Support), item 8 (Scottish Fire and Rescue Service - Thematic Report: Community Engagement) and item 11 (Service Care – Children’s Rights);
- (ii) to note the additions to the planner at item 19 (Publication of Updated National Child Protection Guidance) and item 20 (National Guidance – Learning Reviews); and
- (iii) to note that the Divisional Commander would liaise with the Road Safety Pan-Grampian Group to ascertain whether the author of their Annual Report could provide a presentation to a future meeting of the Committee.

URGENT NOTICE OF MOTION BY COUNCILLOR HOUGHTON - ABERDEEN NIGHTCLUB SAFETY CONCERNS

5. The Committee had before it a Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Houghton in the following terms:-

“that the Committee:-

- (1) Notes with regret, the recent reporting of increased spiking of women in night clubs in Aberdeen;
- (2) Notes with regret, the apparent use of syringes for spiking and the heightened alarm this will cause;
- (3) Commends the work of Reclaim these Streets Aberdeen, and others in raising awareness and providing safety advice;
- (4) Encourages all nightlife venues in Aberdeen to increase their existing precautions and to explore other reasonable measures to ensure their venues are safe for nightlife in Aberdeen;
- (5) Instructs the Chief Officer - Governance to write to nightclubs in Aberdeen asking them to provide assurance on what steps they will take to increase the safety of their customers; and
- (6) Instructs the Chief Officer - Governance to write to Police Scotland Divisional Commander for Aberdeen asking for an update on reports of drink spiking, including numbers of reported incidents, arrests and what campaigns or other measures are ongoing with the night-time hospitality sector and to provide the response to this request to all members of the committee.

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Councillor Houghton moved his motion and explained the rationale behind his request.

The Committee heard from the Divisional Commander in relation to the current situation regarding drug related incidents and arrests in terms of the night-time hospitality sector, indicating that there was a broad divergence of circumstances which were not just confined to nightclubs.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note with regret, the recent reporting of increased spiking of women in night clubs in Aberdeen;
- (ii) to note with regret, the apparent use of syringes for spiking and the heightened alarm this will cause;
- (iii) to commend the work of Reclaim these Streets Aberdeen, and others in raising awareness and providing safety advice;
- (iv) to encourage all nightlife venues in Aberdeen to increase their existing precautions and to explore other reasonable measures to ensure their venues are safe for all patrons in Aberdeen;
- (v) to instruct the Chief Officer - Governance to write to nightlife venues, asking them to provide assurance on what steps they will take to increase the safety of their customers and to confirm what procedures are in place to ensure customers are safe should they present to staff as being under the influence of drugs or excessive alcohol;
- (vi) to instruct the Chief Officer – Governance to engage with the Local Licensing Forum and Aberdeen Inspired’s Night-Time Economy Manager to work with the nightlife industry within Aberdeen to assist premises in the City to mitigate against further incidents of spiking; and
- (vii) to instruct the Chief Officer - Governance to write to Police Scotland Divisional Commander for Aberdeen asking for an update on reports of drink spiking, including numbers of reported incidents, arrests and what campaigns or other measures are ongoing with the night-time hospitality sector and to provide the response to this request to all members of the committee in the form of a service update.

POLICE SCOTLAND - THEMATIC REPORT : DOMESTIC ABUSE/COERCIVE CONTROL - POL/21/234

6. The Committee had before it a report from the Divisional Commander which provided an update in relation to ‘Coercive Control’ following the implementation of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 in April 2019.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee discuss, comment on and endorse the report.

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The Divisional Commander provided an overview of the report (1) making reference to the partnership work being undertaken locally with support agencies including Rape Crisis and Grampian Women's Aid, which had ensured that there had been no decrease in reporting of Domestic Abuse; and (2) highlighting the Scottish Government's Domestic Abuse campaign, in conjunction with Police Scotland and Safer Scotland, which was well supported in North East Division social media channels including significant input by the Violence Against Women Partnerships.

The Committee resolved:-

to endorse the report.

POLICE SCOTLAND - ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2020/2021 - POL/21/235

7. The Committee had before it a report by the Divisional Commander which provided details of the Police Scotland Performance Report – April 2020 to March 2021.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee discuss, comment on and endorse the report.

The Divisional Commander highlighted the key information from the Performance report, specifically (1) making reference to the significant change to law and legislation centred on the COVID-19 Pandemic during this period; and (2) staffing and recruitment advising that the North East Division had remained consistent with a steady although relatively small dip in numbers throughout the past year, but noting that a further intake totalling 35 was planned for later in the year, which was the highest number in Scotland.

Councillor Greig moved as an amendment:-

that the Committee:-

- (1) requests an explanation of the reasoning and formula for the current authorised establishment figures for officer FTEs and staff FTEs as applied to all police divisions and to the North East;
- (2) requests an explanation for the changes in the totals of officers and staff FTEs in the North East since Quarter 2 in 2012/13; at which point the North East totals were 1527.4 FTE officers and 635.9 FTE staff and the 2012 baseline was 1,472 FTE officers; and
- (3) agrees that the explanations referred to above be provided by the Police Scotland Divisional Commander for Aberdeen to all members of the committee through a Service Update.

As there was no seconder, in terms of Standing Order 29.12, the amendment by Councillor Greig fell.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to endorse the report; and

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- (ii) to note that the Chief Officer - Governance would liaise with the Divisional Commander with a view to the Divisional Commander providing further clarity and context in respect of staffing numbers.

SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT - SFR/21/236

8. The Committee had before it the report from the Local Area Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) which presented the performance of SFRS against the objectives contained within the Aberdeen City Local Fire and Rescue Plan.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee note the performance data provided in appendix A (of the report) in relation to the SFRS 2021/22 Performance Report.

The Committee heard from the Local Senior Officer who provided a summary of the report and responded to questions from members of the Committee in relation to fires in residential and communal bins and the storage of battery/electrical items in individual settings.

The Local Senior Officer also provided details in relation to Operation Fawkes, indicating that there had been a reduction in anti-social fires in the city.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendation contained within the report.

NEW PUBLIC PROTECTION WEBSITE: ABERDEEN PROTECTS INCLUDING PRESENTATION - OPE/21/265

9. The Committee had before it a report by the Chief Operating Officer, which provided contextual information regarding the new Aberdeen Protects website, a link to which could be found [here](#).

The report recommended:-

that the Committee note the development of the Aberdeen Protects website, and provide any feedback as deemed appropriate.

The Committee (1) received a demonstration of the public facing Aberdeen Protects website which was an overarching name being given to cover a range of partnership structures within the city; and (2) noted that these structures were made up of organisations that work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of adults, children, young people and their families.

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The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the development of the Aberdeen Protects website; and
- (ii) to endorse the work undertaken by officers in respect of the development of the website thus far.

CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21 - OPE/21/247

10. The Committee had before it a report by the Chief Operating Officer which presented the Chief Social Work Officer's Annual Report for year 2020/21, which (1) outlined the role and responsibilities exercised by the Chief Social Work Officer; (2) provided information on statutory decision making in the period; and (3) provided progress on key areas of social work provision within Aberdeen City.

The report recommended:-

That the Committee note the content of the Annual Report, as attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

The Chief Social Work Officer provided an overview of the report and appendix.

The Convener indicated that the 'Foreword' of the Annual Report was very useful and commended all staff in the Social Work Service for their work in continuing to protect the public (both adults and children), particularly during the pandemic period.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve the recommendation contained within the report; and
- (ii) to concur with the remarks of the Convener.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGE OF CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT 2019 IN ABERDEEN CITY - OPE/21/233

11. The Committee had before it a report by the Chief Operating Officer which sought to provide assurance of the planning in place within Aberdeen City on the implementation of changes to practice required in line with the imminent commencement of the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the positive implications for all children under 12 years of age whose behaviour may currently see them participate in an adult justice system, largely designed for adults;
- (b) note that on 16 September 2021, ministerial agreement was given to delay the commencement of Part 1 of Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019. A confirmed date for full implementation has not been identified; and

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- (c) note the localised plans in place, referred to in section 3.2 of the report, are meeting the needs of the vulnerable children that the Act seeks to protect.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve the recommendations contained within the report; and
- (ii) to instruct the Chief Executive to write to the appropriate Minister in the Scottish Government to seek additional funding to fulfil the requirements of the new legislation.

WATER SAFETY - OPE/21/239

12. The Committee had before it a report by the Chief Operating Officer which provided (1) an overview of Aberdeen City Council's involvement in the Aberdeen Water Safety Group; and (2) an update on this group and Environmental Services' current initiatives.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee notes and endorses the information contained within the report.

The Convener made reference to the Beach Risk Assessment being undertaken every three years and sought to ascertain whether details of the forthcoming assessment could be submitted to the members of the Committee.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve the recommendation contained within this report;
- (ii) to instruct the Chief Officer – Operations and Protective Services to circulate a Service Update to members of the Committee on the findings of the Aberdeen Beach Risk Assessment which will be undertaken in November 2021;
- (iii) to commend the work undertaken by the Aberdeen Water Safety Group;
- (iv) to note that the Chief Officer – Operations and Protective Services would liaise with the Aberdeen Water Safety Group to (1) ascertain whether a presentation could be provided to the Committee at a future meeting; and (2) whether a media release could be undertaken prior to the festive season to raise awareness of the new signage installed along the beach front.

BUILDING STANDARDS ACTIVITY REPORT - COM/21/238

13. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Commissioning which sought to provide assurance and an overview of Council responsibilities in relation to securing dangerous buildings and protecting public safety, as well as activity on unauthorised building work and unauthorised occupation of buildings.

The report recommended:-

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that the Committee –

- (a) note and endorses the contents of the report and appendix; and
- (b) agree to receive a further Building Standards Activity Report at the meeting of the Public Protection Committee on 28 June 2022.

The Committee were advised (1) that through negotiations, 18 live notices had been closed after a permanent solution was implemented which had brought live notices down from 27 to 11; and (2) Building Standards staff continued to monitor the live notices which were served to owners to set a deadline for resolution for completion of any necessary work to maintain public safety.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations contained within the report.

VALEDICTORY

14. The Convener advised that Mrs Emma Robertson would be replacing Mr Derek Jamieson as the Committee Clerk. She expressed her thanks to Mr Jamieson, for his assistance, support and contribution over the past few years and wished him well in his new role within the Council.

Following their announcements that they were moving on, the Convener also expressed her thanks and best wishes to Mr Bruce Farquharson (Scottish Fire and Rescue Services) for his contribution and support of the Committee and Andrew Morrison (Environmental Health Services) for his work, particularly throughout the pandemic.

The Committee resolved:-

to concur with the Convener.

- **COUNCILLOR JENNIFER STEWART, Convener.**