

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing & Public Protection
DATE	27 May 2025
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Thematic Report - Wilful-Fireraising
REPORT NUMBER	POL/25/117
DIRECTOR	
CHIEF OFFICER	
REPORT AUTHOR	Inspector Martyn Thomson, North East Division, Police Scotland
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.20

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an overview of Wilful Fire-Raising in Aberdeen City and the collaborative approaches with stakeholders in response.

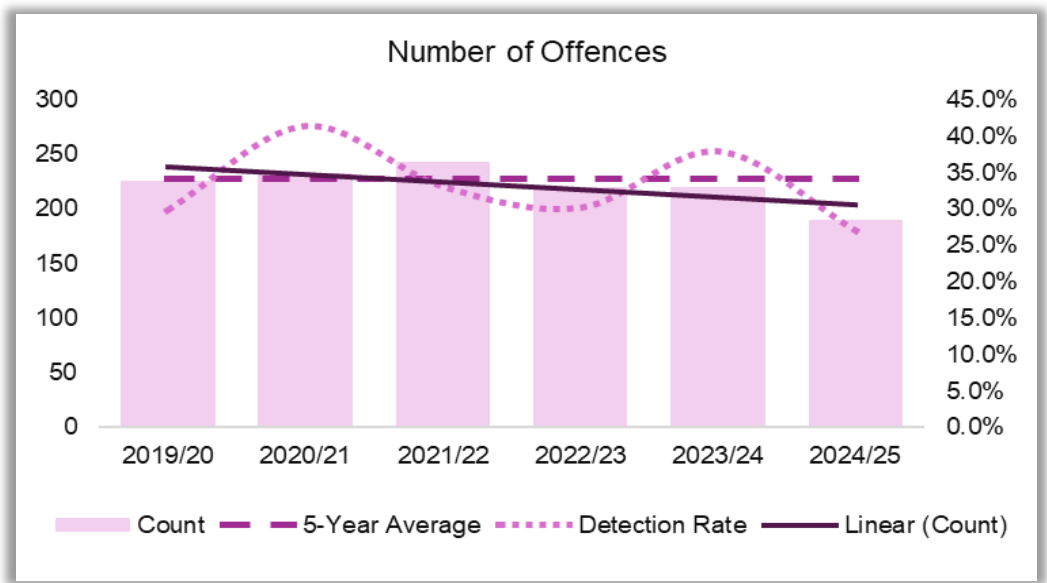
2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 That the Committee: -

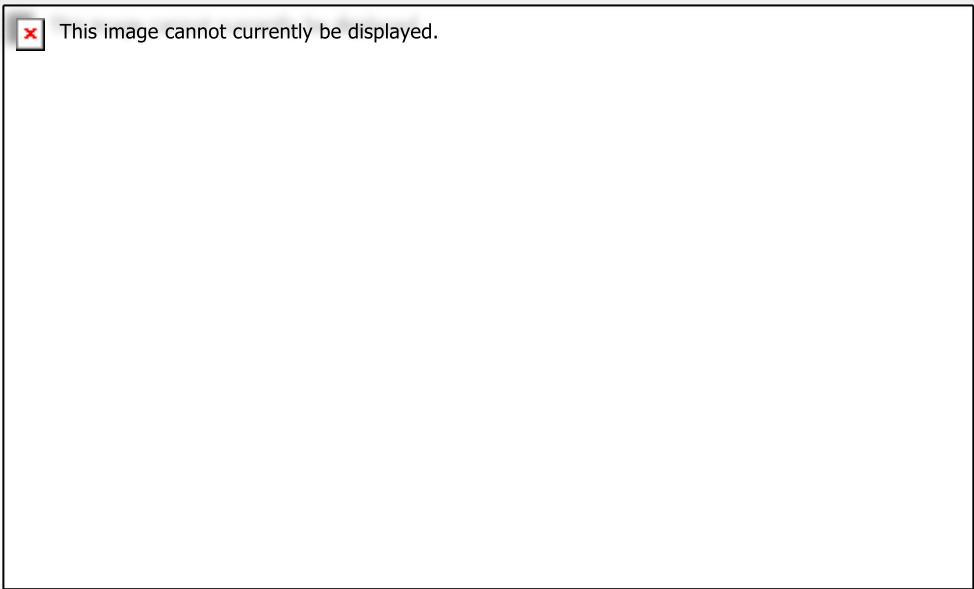
Discuss, comment on, and endorse the report.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 Wilful Fire-raising offences across North East Division have followed a consistent downward trend over the last five years (2020 to 2025), aligned with broader force-wide reductions.

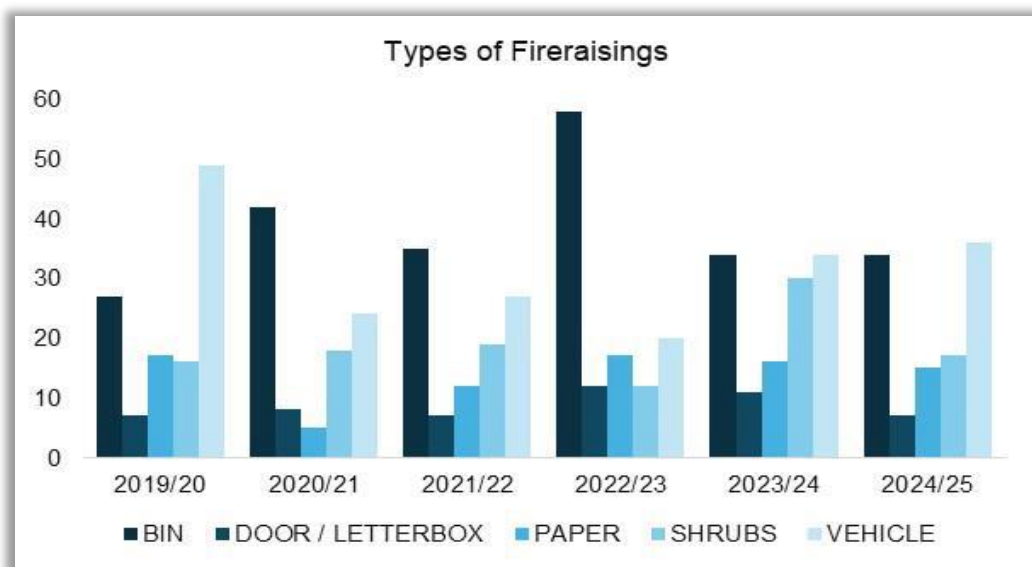


- 3.2 Aberdeen City North (01/04/2024 to 28/02/2025) recorded 49 wilful fire-raising offences during this period, with a five-year average of 62.2 crimes. Aberdeen City South recorded 41 wilful fire-raising related offences, with a five-year average of 58.4 crimes.
- 3.3 Division wide data analysis highlights both seasonal and geographic spikes in offending - particularly during March, June and November - with statistical peaks occurring in late evenings and on Saturdays. This trend appears linked to seasonal behaviours and social activity patterns, which may offer opportunities for targeted preventative work.



3.4 OFFENDER PROFILES IN 2024/25 – NORTH EAST DIVISION

- 75% of reported wilful fire-raising offences involved a single accused.
- Over 80% of accused individuals were male, the majority 18 years and under.
- Analysis highlights a correlation between wilful fire-raising behaviours and wider social issues, including anti-social conduct, educational disengagement, and substance misuse.
- Common targets included bins, shrubs/gorse, paper, letterboxes, and vehicles.



3.5 REPEAT OFFENDING

- 3.6 Five individuals within Aberdeen City were identified as having committed several wilful fire-raising offences (between two and four) during the 2024/25 period. These incidents typically occurred within a narrow geographic radius. A small but persistent cohort of repeat offenders disproportionately impacts local incident rates and strains partnership resources.
- 3.7 All those identified as repeat offenders were reported to either the Procurator Fiscal or Children's Reporter and are currently within the criminal justice process. One option which will be considered as part of sentencing, should individuals be found guilty, is referral to a Fire Safety Education Course run by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, allowing a longer-term prevention approach to be undertaken.

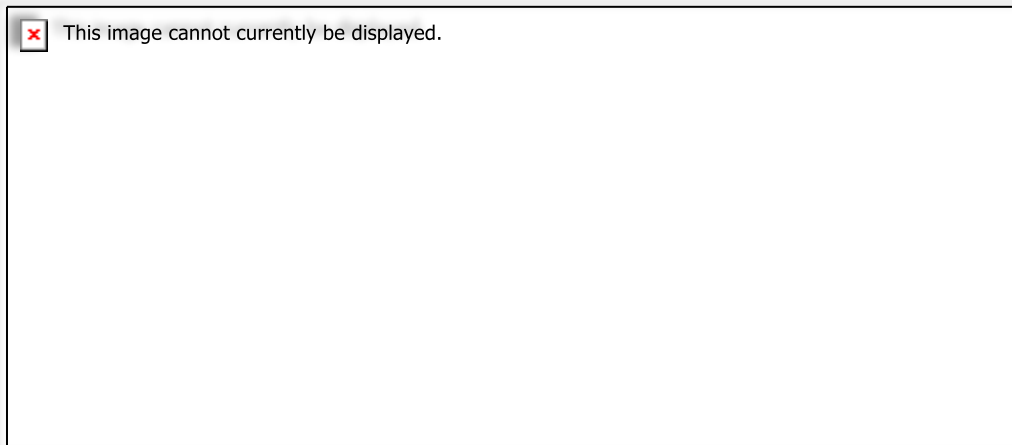
3.8 OPERATIONAL RESPONSES

- **Briefings:** Delivered to frontline officers and community partners to raise awareness and support early intervention efforts.
- **Focused Patrols:** Conducted in affected communities, with active community engagement.
- **Media Messaging:** Public communications aimed at promoting the secure storage of combustible materials to reduce opportunity and risk.
- **Joint Patrols:** Carried out with Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), ASBIT, and Community Police Teams.
- **Enhanced Youth Referrals:** Pathways to services and diversionary programmes where appropriate.
- **Education:** SFRS delivers targeted, school-based inputs in areas affected by wilful fire-raising.

Our Youth Engagement Officers were recently involved in the delivery of a Fire Skills course for Northfield Academy students in partnership with SFRS and SAS. Aberdeen Donside MSP Jackie Dunbar was so impressed by the event, delivered over 5 days, that she submitted a motion to the Scottish Government for all involved to be recognised.

3.9 SCOTTISH FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE CONTEXTUAL INSIGHT

- 3.10 Data provided by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service highlights a positive long-term trend in Aberdeen City, where deliberate fire-raising has fallen below the national 10-year average in recent years. This is supported by trend analysis which shows sustained reductions across all property types, with notable recent decreases in outdoor fires.
- 3.11 The chart below illustrates this downward trend in comparison to national averages:



3.12 SFRS analysis notes that this improvement aligns with collaborative prevention efforts, including:

- **Community education** via the Fire Safety Support and Education Programme (FSSE), particularly for young people involved in wilful fire-raising incidents.
- **Engagement with high-rise building management** regarding malicious activations.
- **Fire safety equipment intervention** post incident.
- **Joint Police-SFRS Patrols.**

3.13 These proactive, intelligence-led measures are viewed as critical enablers of Aberdeen City's sustained reduction in deliberate fire-raising.

3.14 GEOGRAPHICAL COMPARISON: ABERDEENSHIRE AND MORAY

3.15 Comparative analysis shows that wilful fire-raising is less prevalent in Aberdeenshire and Moray than in Aberdeen City. This disparity is likely due to differences in rural composition, and population density.

3.16 Notably, while Moray's overall figures remain low, isolated increases in fire-raising activity have been observed - primarily in urban centres such as Elgin. These localised spikes underscore the importance of place-based analysis to inform targeted preventions and resource deployment.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Fire-raising offences across North East Division have shown a consistent downward trend over the past five years, reflecting the effectiveness of targeted prevention, early intervention, and collaborative working.

- 4.2 While social media commentary can amplify community concern, the actual incidence of wilful fire-raising in Aberdeen City remains below the national average and continues a downward trend. This highlights the importance of data-led insight over perception driven narratives.
- 4.3 Scottish Fire and Rescue Service data confirms that fire-raising levels in Aberdeen City have remained below the national 10-year average, with significant reductions in outdoor fire incidents. This highlights the impact of sustained joint strategic interventions.
- 4.4 Multi-agency actions - such as joint patrols, post-incident checks, education initiatives, and Hub-based case discussions - has supported early risk identification, youth diversion, and the safeguarding of vulnerable communities.
- 4.5 Despite this progress, wilful fire-raising remains a persistent, localised issue within Aberdeen City, demanding continued vigilance. A sustained emphasis on intelligence-sharing, early intervention, and place-based activity will be critical to maintain momentum, minimising harm, and reinforcing public confidence.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

8. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?

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Strategic Risk	No significant risks			
Compliance	No significant risks			
Operational	No significant risks			
Financial	No significant risks			
Reputational	No significant risks			
Environment / Climate	No significant risks			

9. OUTCOMES

<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	Police Scotland are key partners within Community Planning Aberdeen and help contribute to the shared vision for 2026 that ' <i>Aberdeen is a place where all people can prosper</i> ' and towards the achievement of the LOIP theme which aims to make people more resilient and protect them from harm; where every child, irrespective of their circumstances, is supported to grow, develop and reach their full potential; and where all people in Aberdeen are entitled to live within our community in a manner in which they feel safe and protected from harm, supported when necessary and fully included in the life of the city.

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Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	Police Scotland are key partners within Community Planning Aberdeen and help contribute to the shared vision for 2026 that ' <i>Aberdeen is a place where all people can prosper</i> ' and towards the achievement of the LOIP theme which aims to support individuals and communities to live in healthy, sustainable ways.
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10. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	None

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 Not applicable

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Not applicable

13. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Name	Martyn Thomson
Title	Inspector, North East Division, Police Scotland
Email Address	Local Police Commander inbox, Members use only

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