



**REPORT TO: POLICE AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON
20 FEBRUARY 2020**

SUBJECT: THEMATIC REPORT – COMMUNICATIONS

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1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee about how Police Scotland communicates with the public at a local level.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (J) (4) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the monitoring of delivery of the Police and Fire and Rescue Services in Moray.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Police and Fire and Rescue Services Committee scrutinise and note the information provided in this report in relation to Communications.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The focus of Police Scotland is on keeping people safe. Communicating effectively with the public is vital in preventing crime and disorder, building confidence and providing reassurance. To support that focus Police Scotland are committed to providing information which is timely, accurate and relevant to the public via numerous channels.
- 3.2 The Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 sets out the principles that *“the Police Service, working in collaboration with others where appropriate, should seek to achieve that main purpose by policing in a way which is accessible to, and engaged with, local communities, and promotes measures to prevent crime, harm and disorder”*.
- 3.3 This report details how Police Scotland Divisions and Departments communicate and engage with local communities.

4. RESPONSE

- 4.1 Police Scotland communicates with the public in a variety of different ways, from face-to-face interactions; community engagement in various formats; the use of digital and social media platforms and engaging with the media.
- 4.2 The Corporate Communications service within Police Scotland has responsibility for communicating the organisation's strategic priorities, and providing communications support to Local Policing Divisions and Departments, with the aim of improving the safety and wellbeing of people, places and communities.
- 4.3 As a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Police Scotland also has a legal duty to warn and inform the public about emergencies and Corporate Communications discharges this responsibility on behalf of the service. As well as responding once an emergency has happened, it also involves planning with resilience partners, such as Local Authorities.
- 4.4 Local Divisions also have a responsibility to communicate directly with people living in the local policing area through, for example, attending and arranging community engagement events, community forums, partnership events, developing direct relationships with local media and using social media.
- 4.5 Both Corporate Communications and Local Divisions, working alongside partners where appropriate, play a key role in communicating preventative messages as part of Police Scotland's focus on 'Keeping People Safe'. National campaigns are proactively designed, co-ordinated and delivered throughout the year on a range of issues including festive safety, doorstep crime and sexual crime. Exploring opportunities with the national and local media, utilising social media channels and working with partners is key to communicating each campaign's key messages.

Media

- 4.6 Corporate Communications is the main point of contact between Police Scotland and the media. Its purpose is to provide specialist advice on communications, media management and output.
- 4.7 Engagement with the media and the information which flows to the media is an integral part of the support provided by Corporate Communications. The media is an important channel through which Police Scotland can reach relevant audiences however it also plays a fundamental role in a free and democratic society and in keeping the public informed on a wide range of issues.
- 4.8 Information which is provided to the media must have a legitimate policing purpose and support the objectives of Police Scotland. There is a clear responsibility to ensure that interactions and relationships with the media are professional, transparent, impartial and capable of withstanding scrutiny.

- 4.9 Divisions are also encouraged to establish and maintain regular contact with local press on matters of local crime, local campaigns, local crime initiatives of topics which are purely of interest or applicable to the public at local community level. Officers within the Moray area continue to identify opportunities for local media coverage and, where appropriate, organise with partners to promote partnership working.

Social media

- 4.10 Corporate Communications Officers and Police Officers use social media as a crucial way of communicating messages and engaging with the public. It allows Police Scotland to share real-time information about the work of Local Policing Teams and to notify the public about ongoing incidents. It is also an effective way of enlisting help with an ongoing criminal enquiry or missing person search; the chances of reaching someone who recognises the person or people involved increases with every retweet and shared post.
- 4.11 Social media also provides Police Scotland with a tool to publicise the proactive operations and initiatives being carried out on a daily basis within communities to help keep people safe. It is a communication channel which offers an opportunity to talk directly to the public and increases community engagement. For example Officers within North East Division routinely carry out live 'chats' on Facebook which offer the public an opportunity to ask questions about a topic and receive a real-time response. Previous sessions on Road Policing, Recruitment and Domestic Abuse have proved particularly successful, with thousands of people engaging during a short period of time.
- 4.12 The corporate Police Scotland Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts are run by Corporate Communications and are used to promote campaigns, policies and work of national importance. Each Division also has its own Facebook and Twitter account, with further localised Twitter accounts for different areas. For example, in addition to the North East Twitter account there are also devolved accounts for Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire South, Aberdeenshire North and Moray. These local accounts are focused on engaging with local communities and communicating about the work of the Local Policing Teams.
- 4.13 In Moray, numerous Police Officers have access to social media which empowers the communication of local messages and information directly to people living in the communities the Officers serve. It enables Officers to publicise proactive events, successful operations, provide crime prevention advice and retweet partner messages.

In Moray, the local Twitter account has more than 4,000 followers. The North East Division Twitter account has 49,500 followers.

@NorthEPolice/ @MorayPolice

One Facebook page exists for North East Division as a whole – it has more than 104,000 followers. The Police Scotland national Facebook page has more than 304,850 followers.

@NorthEastPoliceDivision/ @PoliceScotland

- 4.14 Social media is always evolving and its use worldwide will continue to grow. The advantages of social media use by Police outweigh the disadvantages and it is a communication channel Police Scotland will continue to invest in and explore. Members of the public, businesses and organisations will also continue to be encouraged to follow Police Scotland social media channels in order to receive information of relevance.

Working with partners

- 4.15 Partnership working and the sharing of information with organisations, including Local Authorities such as Moray Council, is vital to ensure consistency of message and to impact positively on public confidence. Police Scotland works with partners to identify opportunities for collaborative working to deliver joint communications support for campaigns and initiatives.
- 4.16 A close working relationship is also crucial in the event of a major incident so that messages are consistent and accurate. Police Scotland chairs the North Public Communications Group (PCG), of which Moray Council is a member, and which supports the Local Resilience Partnership in maintaining emergency plans.

Transformation

- 4.17 In September 2019, Corporate Communications underwent a restructure to enable the department to deliver a seven-day a week media response service to deal with the 30,000+ enquiries from journalists across Scotland received each year. Alongside a national News Desk, eight Executive business leads now support various portfolio areas of Police Scotland, including dedicated strategic communications support for the North Divisions which includes the North East.
- 4.18 The Corporate Communications department continues to work alongside local Divisions to enable and empower Officers to communicate effectively with local communities.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The Moray Council's responsibilities with regards to the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 are directly relevant to Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan.

(b) Policy and Legal

This report is presented to the Moray Police and Fire and Rescue Services Committee within its remit for local scrutiny of the Police.

(c) Financial implications

There are no identified financial implications.

(d) Risk Implications

There are no identified risk implications.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no identified staffing implications.

(f) Property

Not applicable.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

Not applicable.

(h) Consultations

The Local Police Plan, upon which the performance is reporting, was subject to consultation with elected representatives, and was heavily influenced by ongoing feedback from local communities within the Moray Council area.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Communicating effectively with the public is vital in preventing crime and disorder, building confidence in Police Scotland and providing reassurance. By working in collaboration with others where appropriate, Police Scotland aim to use effective communication as a way to engage with local communities and promote measures to prevent crime, harm and disorder.

6.2 Partnership working and the sharing of information with organisations, including Local Authorities such as Moray Council, is vital to ensure consistency of message and to impact positively on public confidence. Police Scotland will continue to identify opportunities for collaborative working to deliver joint communications support for campaigns and initiatives and to work cohesively in the event of a major incident.

6.3 The Corporate Communications department will continue to work alongside local Divisions to enable and empower Officers to communicate effectively with local communities.

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Background Papers: N/A

Ref: