



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

Improving Policing across Scotland

26 February 2015

PRESS RELEASE

HMICS Publish Inspection of Local Policing in Ayrshire

Strictly EMBARGOED until 1100 hrs Thursday, February 26

Incidents of antisocial behaviour and disorder have significantly dropped across the communities of Ayrshire and public confidence in its local policing is high, says HMICS in a report published today (Thursday, February 26).

However it found that complaints against the police were on the rise in the division and there was no appraisal system in place for constables and staff.

The report encourages the division to help local scrutiny groups understand how policing operates in Ayrshire and to improve the level of participation by partners and councillors in setting local policing priorities.

The HMICS Report, Local Policing+ Inspection of Ayrshire Division, is the second in the rolling programme under which all 14 local policing divisions of Police Scotland will be inspected to assess their state, effectiveness and efficiency. The first inspection, of Fife Division, was published in October and these inspections will provide a consistent means of assessing the quality of local policing across Scotland and highlight examples of best practice.

This latest report shows that, in line with Fife, the morale of officers and staff has been adversely affected by the pace and nature of change following the creation of Police Scotland, increasing layers of bureaucracy are a common concern and that internal communication needs to be improved.

Key performance indicators and performance targets are strongly reinforced in the division and some officers and staff felt that the emphasis on targets had unintended consequences. An example provided by officers was the use of 'Stop and Search', which although valued by the organisation was felt by them to be prioritised disproportionately over other valuable police work that was not measured.

This inspection follows the HMICS Crime Audit 2014 which identified Ayrshire as one of four divisions where an improvement plan for crime recording was required. That work is now in progress.

HM Inspector of Constabulary Derek Penman said: "Ayrshire Division takes in a diverse mix of communities, featuring some of the most affluent and the most deprived areas in Scotland. It has a number of challenges and we have identified areas for improvement.

"The numbers of those seriously injured on the roads in Ayrshire increased by 17% between March and October last year, the largest percentage increase in Scotland and in contrast to a reduction nationally. A focussed approach is being taken to address this and influence driver behaviour.

"The division is not complacent in addressing crime and takes a problem solving method to tackle issues as they arise. They work well with their partners in the three local authority areas and their use of social media and the relationship between their campus cops and the young people from their communities are examples of good practice.

"But we found that opportunities are being missed for wider engagement between local officers and their communities. This may be linked to the consistent demands for community policing officers to support response policing and a review of this practice forms one of our recommendations to the Divisional Commander.

"Internal communication was an issue with some officers in Ayrshire expressing the opinion that Police Scotland currently is not upholding its own values in relation to staff and they sought more face-to-face communication with their senior officers."

The report contains a total of six recommendations - three for Police Scotland, one for the Scottish Police Authority and two for the divisional commander.

Two of the recommendations relate to external engagement with local authorities and scrutiny groups while one relates to internal engagement and the commissioning of a staff survey.

Additionally, Police Scotland should ensure relevant information about complaints is provided to local scrutiny groups and progress a consistent national performance and appraisal system.

The Divisional Commander should also review the roles of community and response policing teams and take into account the views of officers, staff and stakeholders while doing so.

Mr Penman added: “As a consequence of our inspection, we will expect that Police Scotland will take forward our recommendations and the relevant good practice is shared across Scotland to promote continuous improvement.

“Local policing is a fundamental part of Police Reform and requires cooperation between the police, local authorities, partners and communities to reduce crime and disorder and increase confidence. Local policing divisions must engage effectively with their communities to understand and meet their needs and concerns.

“Differences across the 14 local policing divisions present opportunities for learning, improvement and maximising efficiency and effectiveness.”

The next in the HMICS series of Local Policing+ Inspections, of Aberdeen Division, will be published in May.

END

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Key Findings and Recommendations from the Report are listed below.

The HMICS Report Local Policing+ Inspection of Ayrshire Division is available to download at the HMICS website www.hmics.org from 11.00hrs, February 26, 2015.

To arrange a broadcast interview with HM Inspector of Constabulary Scotland, Mr Derek Penman QPM, or to request a photograph, please contact:

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REPORT KEY FINDINGS:

Outcomes

- The division has delivered sustained reductions in overall levels of reported crime, but the rate of reduction has slowed over the past 12 months.
- Detection rates have increased progressively over the past three years.
- The division in conjunction with its partners has achieved significant reductions in the number of reported incidents of antisocial behaviour and disorder.
- The number of people killed on roads has not changed but the number of people seriously injured has increased.

- Public satisfaction and confidence rates are amongst the highest in Scotland and are continuing to improve.
- Complaints about the police are increasing and the division does not provide statistical information on complaints about the police to local scrutiny committees.

Leadership and Governance

- The setting of clear objectives to achieve local policing plan priorities provides the division a method of reporting progress.
- Consultation with local partners and councillors on the content of Local Policing Plans is effective and could be improved further by broadening their involvement in the setting of local priorities.
- The division makes good use of social media to engage with communities.
- The division has effective relationships in place with community planning partners and local councillors.
- Opportunities for wider engagement between local officers and local communities are being missed.
- There is greater involvement of elected councillors in local policing than was the case under legacy force arrangements.
- The division could do more to support local scrutiny arrangements by raising awareness of wider policing issues.
- The Scottish Police Authority are progressing plans to improve dialogue between national and local scrutiny and accountability bodies.

Planning and Processes

- The division has benefited from increased access to specialist resources as a result of police reform.
- Increases in bureaucracy were a recurring concern expressed by officers and staff during our inspection.
- The division has the capacity and capability to plan for significant events within its area.
- The division has processes in place to review the effectiveness of activity and support continuous improvement.

People

- There is a commitment to mainstreaming equality duties throughout every aspect of local policing.

- There is no performance appraisal system for constables and staff within the division.
- There is a significant and as yet unfulfilled desire from officers and staff for regular face-to-face dialogue with senior officers.
- Some officers and staff expressed the view that the organisation was not upholding its own values of Integrity, Fairness and Respect in relation to its staff.
- The pace and nature of change has affected the morale of officers and staff.
- More needs to be done to improve internal communications.

Resources

- The effectiveness of community policing arrangements is being affected by regular abstractions to support response policing.
- There is an opportunity for the division, in reviewing operational base levels, to get policing closer to communities.
- The division has a good overview of its estate and has identified opportunities to make savings by sharing accommodation with partners.

Partnerships

- Partnership working is well established in all three local authority areas.
- Local authority liaison officers play a key role in supporting partnership activity in each local authority.
- Campus officers have helped build good relationships with young people, which may be a contributory factor in reducing antisocial behaviour and disorder in the division and support the delivery of wider social outcomes for communities.
- The division is making a valuable contribution to partnership activity but this could be enhanced if the divisional partnership roles were more closely aligned to community-based policing.

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation 1:

Police Scotland should ensure that reports containing statistical information relating to complaints about the police are supplied to all local scrutiny committees. The reports should contain sufficient contextual information to be meaningful to committees.

Recommendation 2:

Police Scotland should review its engagement process for the development of local policing plans to ensure timely and meaningful involvement by Local Authorities in the identification and setting of local priorities.

Recommendation 3:

The Divisional Commander should work with each local scrutiny group to assist in improving awareness of policing.

Recommendation 4:

Police Scotland should progress its interim arrangements for a consistent national approach to police officer and police staff appraisal for 2015/16 and expedite its plans to fully deliver a robust national Performance and Appraisal System by 2016/17.

Recommendation 5:

The Scottish Police Authority should commission the planned Police Scotland staff survey as soon as practicable and ensure that this is undertaken independently.

Recommendation 6:

The Divisional Commander should incorporate the proposed review of operational base levels into a wider review of the roles and responsibilities of community and response policing teams that takes account of the views of officers, staff and stakeholders.

END NOTES