



Police Report in response to Motion from Councillor
Webber in relation to Balerno Police station.

Introduction

Councillor Susan Webber proposed a motion at the South west Local Committee on 13th September 2018 which was seconded by Councillor Phil Doggart

Reinstatement of Balerno Police Station

- 1) Welcomes the increased use of Balerno police station between June, July and August 2018.*
- 2) Notes the effective monitoring of CCTV and the interaction with officers stationed in Balerno.*
- 3) Welcomes the reduction in crime in the Balerno area during the period the station was open.*
- 4) Requests Police Scotland to provide a report within one cycle indicating the benefits and costs of improving local officer availability.*
- 5) Requests Police Scotland, within the same report, to identify other under-utilised stations in the Locality and to elaborate as to whether the positive action in Balerno can be reproduced in other areas. To agree if the outcome was not possible to increase utilisation of local police stations, then mitigating plans and actions should be reported.*

In response to the motion the following is being reported as requested.

Background

The first point to clarify from the motion is around the wording of 'reinstatement' of the station. This would imply that the station has not been in use, however there has continually been officers based in Balerno station since the closure of the front counter facilities. Although all may not be Edinburgh Divisional resources, the station has been in constant use and frequently used by local Community Officers as a base when working within Balerno. The public counter facility which was staffed by Police Support Staff was closed in January 2014. There is a public phone outside the station that can be used to contact the police control room.

Recent use of Balerno Station

Councillor Webber has referred to the recent use of Balerno station in response to an increase in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in Balerno in May/June/July this year. Although the instances of ASB in Balerno amounted to less than 1% of this call type demand in the South West Local Command, Police Scotland were aware of the impact and community concerns around these instances.

As our response an Operation (Operation Harefield) was developed and commenced. This was a multi-agency approach which was led by the police. As part of this operation it was identified that the main instances ASB occurred in the evenings on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday. To enable a more efficient working environment community officers based at Oxfords used Balerno station on these evenings during part of their shift.

It is of note that this did not result in the station being open to the public, it was an operational decision based on logistics to allow for an effective deployment in relation to Operation Harefield. The officers still required to start and finish their shift from their 'home' station which was Oxfords.

It is not possible to identify the total patrolling time spent in Balerno or if officers were abstracted to other ongoing higher graded incidents, however the following figures are based on the officers and scheduled hours from Operation Harefield during the months of May, June and July.

There were a total of 31 days that officers used Balerno station all on Friday, Saturday and Sundays.

The total number of officer hours scheduled for Operation Harefield amounted to 362 officer hours. Using a rate used by Police Scotland for a Police constable hourly costs this equates to £5,868.

During this time frame there were 17 separate incidents of ASB related to youth disorder in Balerno, two of these related to criminality.

On many occasions the officers on Operation Harefield would have been the only community officers on duty at that time for the whole South West Locality.

It is difficult to capture the response times to the ASB calls retrospectively, however it is undoubted that the proactive approach allowed for early intervention at known frequented areas and visible patrols. Cognisance has to be taken that this proactivity would have occurred no matter what station the officers were based at as one of the main objectives of Operation Harefield was proactive uniformed patrols of these areas.

The approach taken was enabled by the model of community officers currently within Edinburgh Division. The dedicated number of community officers, allows for a flexible approach to community concerns and a response and deployment to target specific issues. This model utilised to respond to the instances in Balerno can be reproduced, and has been done so on many occasions, to address issues and community concerns across the whole South West area.

On point 5 of the motion, the only other stations within the locality are Wester Hailes and Oxfords. Both of these stations have uniformed operational officers based within them. The public counter at Oxfords is permanently closed however there are officers based there each day of the week on a dayshift and backshift, not taking into account abstractions.

Wester Hailes has officers based there on a 24/7 basis with a public counter open usually on a daily basis from 0700 to 2300

There are no facilities to hold public surgeries within the stations therefore to mitigate this the community officers hold surgeries in various locations in communities across the locality. These vary from Libraries to local shops and cafes. These sessions are advertised at the locations and on Police and partners social media.