

Minute

Police and Fire Sub-committee

Tuesday, 24 February 2026, 14:00.

Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Place, Kirkwall.



Present

Councillors David Dawson, Duncan A Tullock, Graham A Bevan, Jean E Stevenson, Alexander G Cowie and Raymond S Peace.

Present via remote link (Microsoft Teams)

Councillor Mellissa-Louise Thomson.

Clerk

- Sandra Craigie, Committees Officer.

In Attendance

- Lorna Richardson, Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development.
- Kenny MacPherson, Head of Property and Asset Management.
- Veer Bansal, Solicitor.

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service:

- Robert Lennox, Area Commander.
- David McGroarty, Group Commander.

Police Scotland:

- Chief Inspector Scott Robertson.

Declarations of Interest

- No declarations of interest were intimated.

Chair

- Councillor David Dawson.

1. Performance Against Orkney Fire and Rescue Plan

After consideration of a report by Robert Lennox, Local Senior Officer, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from David McGroarty, Group Commander, the Sub-committee:

Scrutinised the statistical performance of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Services, Orkney Islands area, for the period 1 October to 31 December 2025, detailed in the Quarterly Performance Report, attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Local Senior Officer, and obtained assurance that progress was being made against the objectives.

2. Performance against Local Policing Plan

Councillor David Dawson declared an interest in this item, his connection being that he was Chair of Orkney Drugs Dog, but as the matter was not discussed in detail, he did not leave the meeting.

After consideration of a report by Chief Inspector Scott Robertson, Area Commander, copies of which had been circulated, the Sub-committee:

Scrutinised progress made against the objectives set within the Orkney Islands Local Policing Plan 2023 to 2026 Year 3, attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Area Commander, for the period covering 1 April to 31 December 2025, and obtained assurance that progress was being made against the objectives.

Councillor Mellissa-Louise Thomson left the meeting during discussion of this item.

3. Strategic Policing Plan for Scotland 2026-29

Draft Consultation Response

After consideration of a report by the Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Head of Property and Asset Management, the Sub-committee:

Resolved to **recommend to the Council** that the response to the consultation on the draft Strategic Policing Plan for Scotland 2026–2029, previously submitted to the Scottish Police Authority on 23 January 2026 to ensure the Council's views were represented within the consultation timeframe, attached as Appendix 1 to this Minute, be approved.

4. Conclusion of Meeting

At 15:10 the Chair declared the meeting concluded.

Signed: David Dawson.

Draft Consultation Response

Strategic Outcomes

Outcome 1: Communities are safer and more secure, with less crime and improved wellbeing, through effective policing services reflective of local needs.

Response: Strongly Agree

Rationale: This outcome is especially relevant here as the impact of single incidents can be significant due to geography and limited resources. The focus on local needs, prevention, and wellbeing aligns with priorities and the realities of island communities.

Outcome 2: Services are designed and delivered compassionately, in a trauma-informed and person-centred way to ensure victims have trust and confidence in policing and are supported.

Response: Agree

Rationale: The commitment to trauma-informed, person-centred service delivery is positive and in small communities, compassionate policing is essential for building trust and supporting recovery.

Outcome 3: Partners and stakeholders are involved in developing a responsive and proactive whole-system approach to prevention, early intervention and harm reduction.

Response: Neither agree nor disagree

Rationale: Opportunities for partnership working, shared assets and training sit within the sphere of the Community Planning Partnership, and the principles of whole-system working are supported. However, the current arrangements with Police Scotland do not provide for quarterly (three-month) local reporting and scrutiny, which is essential for timely oversight and effective collaboration in Orkney. Without this, it is difficult to fully endorse the outcome as currently implemented

Outcome 4: The working environment is safer and its culture more inclusive and is one where inspiring leadership enables everyone to feel valued and supported.

Response: Neither agree nor disagree

Rationale: The ambition for a safer, inclusive environment is welcome, but the strategy lacks recognition on how these aims will be delivered in islands locations. Persistent challenges in Orkney include limited resourcing, difficulties in recruitment, and the need to travel due to the lack of islands tailored training and development.

Outcome 5: The policing system delivers best value through efficient, effective and sustainable services, which are adaptable, and embrace opportunities for innovation and collaboration.

Response: Agree

Rationale: Support the drive for efficiency, sustainability, and innovation, provided that these changes do not reduce accessibility or visibility in rural and island areas. Technology and estate changes should enhance frontline presence, not diminish it. Monitoring the impact of digital tools on officer time and community engagement will be important to ensure best value is achieved.

Additional comments

"The Council welcomes the Strategic Policing Plan 2026–29 as an overarching framework that sets out clear national priorities and values for policing in Scotland. We recognise that the plan is not intended to address operational detail, but rather to provide direction and outcomes that will guide the development of the Annual and Local Police Plans.

It is important that the plan explicitly acknowledges the diversity of Scotland's communities and the need for flexibility in how national priorities are delivered locally. For rural and island areas such as Orkney, this means ensuring that the framework enables local priorities, challenges, and opportunities to be reflected in subsequent planning and delivery. We encourage the plan to highlight the importance of ongoing engagement with local authorities and communities, so that the strategic outcomes are translated into effective action on the ground.

We support the plan's emphasis on prevention, partnership, compassion, and innovation, and its commitment to inclusive and trauma-informed policing. To realise these ambitions, it is essential that the mechanisms for local input, accountability, and adaptation are clear and robust. This will help ensure that issues such as resourcing, recruitment, and training—while operational in nature—can be addressed appropriately through the Annual and Local Police Plans, in line with the strategic direction set by the plan.

In summary, we support the strategic direction of the plan and ask that it continues to provide space for local voices and priorities, so that policing services remain responsive, effective, and trusted in all communities across Scotland.

Digital tools and estate changes must enhance, not diminish, accessibility and visibility in rural areas. Efficiency gains should not come at the expense of frontline presence. The impact of technology on officer time and community engagement should be monitored and reported.

Road safety, drug-related harm and protection of vulnerable people remain top priorities. Partnership investment and pragmatic flexibility in resource deployment are essential to maintain public confidence and community safety. While we support the plan's strategic outcomes, we urge that implementation is sensitive to the unique needs of island and rural communities, with clear mechanisms for local input, transparent performance measures and sustained partnership working.