

NTBCC - Monthly Police Reports

A regular item on our monthly meeting agenda is the Community Police Report. Over the past few years, some months we have not received any report and the contents of the reports we do receive have varied in detail. There is usually some police attendance at our live meetings but rarely at our virtual meetings. When police officers do attend we appreciate the opportunity to question them further but often we find that the officers cannot answer questions as they are not familiar with the information in the report.

In respect of the contents of the monthly reports we have been concerned that we are not being provided with enough information to understand what is happening in our Community Council area. The standard style of report has more generic information about police activity than specific information focussed on our area. We are aware that other Community Councils (eg Leith and Newhaven CC) receive reports from their local Community Police Team which provide more detail as to the numbers and specific categories of crimes committed.

It is unhelpful to be given simple totals of calls divided by day or night time calls and comparing them to the number of calls received in the same month last year. As a Community Council we need to know what these calls are about and what the police are doing in response. Statistics alone do not explain how effective the policing is in our Community Council area. We have no information about the outcome of police investigation into any crimes reported. Generic statements about police activity or new initiatives do not provide reassurance that our local community is being served well.

The recent EACC (Edinburgh Association of Community Councils) survey report noted as follows:

'Police Community Newsletters' don't give the community-specifics and the level of detail sought. They are patchy. It's felt it is difficult to get hold of relevant information; 'It's virtually impossible to discover what's going on'. Visible gaps in local coverage of misdemeanour and criminal offences serve to undermine community council credibility and standing. It's a serious matter.

We are obviously not the only Community Council concerned about this issue. It is appreciated that the Covid period impacted on the operation of Community Councils and the police service. However we should now look to formalise what we expect from our local Community Police team and request a minimum level of reporting and support from well informed police officers in attendance at our meetings.

I propose that we contact the West End team to express our concerns and to request that

1. (a) the police report be expanded to provide more useful detail
(b) the report be sent to our Secretary at least one working day before the monthly meeting date to allow it to be circulated before the meeting and that
2. (a) officers attend our meetings on a regular basis and
(b) officers be well briefed before they attend so that they can answer questions from the Community Councillors and local residents.

Susan MacInnes
August 2023