

Helensburgh & Lomond Area Committee - Thursday 17th March 2022

Police Scotland Report / Update

The Festive and New Year periods passed without incident largely thanks to the Festive Policing Plan which was in operation throughout the month of December and into January. Additional high-visibility patrols were carried out by officers during this period predominantly in Helensburgh town centre to deter anti-social behaviour and criminality and provide greater public re-assurance. This appears to have had the desired effect as recorded crime typically associated with the Festive period (generally thefts from retail premises and disorder related offences linked to the night time economy) was at a low level.

With the ending of all Coronavirus restrictions in Scotland on Monday 21st March 2022 we should see a return to complete normality in terms of how we perform our duties and engage with the public. We have been slowly getting there over the past few months as the various restrictions have been easing off.

In January this year PC Mark Toner from Helensburgh Police Station was appointed as a full-time Youth Engagement Officer. No officer had been performing this role since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic and it was something that was sorely needed in the local area. PC Toner works in close partnership with local schools, community groups and youth organisations to build relationships with the young people in our area. He is passionate about what he does and his aim is to build their trust and confidence in the police. A lot of his work is around making early interventions where young persons have started to offend with a view to diverting them away from such behaviour and providing them with more positive lifestyle choices.

The Ministry of Defence Police have recently appointed PC Drew Omand as their new full-time Defence Community Police Office based at Churchill in Helensburgh. This is a post that had been lying vacant for over a year and he is a welcome addition to the policing family in Helensburgh. Although he is a Ministry of Defence Police officer whose focus will be on policing the defence estate where service families are housed we will regularly be working with him, as we did his predecessors, on the many matters of mutual concern.

Youth disorder and general anti-social behaviour has not been a major issue for us over the Winter months but that is what we would generally expect. Such issues are generally seasonal and we would expect to see a rise in youth disorder as we enter the Spring with improved weather and lighter nights. There were a few nights in February when youths were congregating in Hermitage Park. We ran a local action plan to deal with this resulting in a number of youths being taken home, tobacco and alcohol being confiscated and fixed penalty notices being issued. In the coming months new CCTV systems are due to be installed in both Hermitage Park and Churchill Square which should act as a deterrent in these two sometimes problematic locations.

Road Crime & Road Safety continues to be the focus of a large part of our operational activity. This is no surprise given the roads network in the Helensburgh and Lomond area. The first and only fixed site speed camera in Argyll & West Dunbartonshire Division has recently been installed on the A814 in the centre of Cardross. The camera should become operational by the end of April 2022 following a period of testing. The main aim of this speed camera is to positively influence driver behaviour and improve road safety. Depending on its effectiveness we will hopefully see more being rolled out elsewhere in Argyll in the future.

Lastly, our main focus at the moment is planning for the start of the tourist season over the Easter holidays and beyond as we go into the Summer months. The influx of tourists to Loch Lomondside and the surrounding areas places a strain on local infrastructure and our policing demands also increase correspondingly. We are working with our partners in Argyll & Bute Council and the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority to have plans and contingencies in place to deal with the anticipated demands.

Inspector Alan Heron