



CAMBUSLANG Community Council

25 Burn Terrace
Cambuslang
G72 7DN

Chief Inspector Geraldine McSherry
Area Commander,
Lanarkshire Division
East Kilbride Police Office
Andrew Street
East Kilbride G74 1AA

23 April 2017

Dear Chief Inspector McSherry,

Review of Police Scotland Estate

Thank you for your letter of 13 April 201 concerning the potential closure of Cambuslang Police Station and relocation of services to Rutherglen.

We have discussed this issue at a meeting of Cambuslang Community Council, and our reply takes account (as requested in your letter) of wider representations and comments made to us by a large number of people in the local community.

To start with, we would like to seek your clarification on three issues.

- a) You refer in your letter to having conducted an “assessment of our local estate, balanced with community need and the provision of a visible, accessible and responsive service, suggests that the retention of both offices is no longer sustainable”. We would be grateful if you could send us a copy of this assessment.
- b) Your letter states that you are reviewing Cambuslang Police Station and other properties “to ensure they are suitable for modern, operational policing and are fit for purpose”. Cambuslang Police Station was purpose-built as a police station in 1994, and we would be grateful if you would clarify why and how the Cambuslang station is no longer modern or fit for purpose.
- c) Your letter says that you are seeking our views, but you also imply that a decision has already been made and that you are advocating closure of Cambuslang Police Station. You will appreciate that there is considerable local scepticism and perhaps even cynicism about your letter merely being a formality and that whatever views are expressed they will have no influence on your decision. We would therefore be grateful if you could clarify how you foresee the steps of the consultation process proceeding (and the associated timetable) and whether it is feasible for local opinion to lead to a different outcome.

Turning to the substance of your letter, we disagree profoundly with the proposal and the strategy that underlies it.

First, **crime, security and anti-social behaviour are among the top concerns of the community of Cambuslang**. In the Cambuslang Community Survey 2015ⁱ (the largest community survey in Scotland), almost half of respondents were unhappy with the levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. Key issues were: house and car burglaries – which are perceived to be high and increasing; graffiti; vandalism; and anti-social behaviour. The public were also critical of the lack of police visibility through regular foot patrols, especially in the evening on the Main Street and the need for better security monitoring. Police were felt, by some, to be responding to reported incidents rather than having an active strategy and regular visible presence to prevent anti-social behaviour.

The business community in Cambuslang shares these concerns. In the Cambuslang Business Surveyⁱⁱ published earlier this year, problems with crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour were highlighted by 80-85% of businesses. One issue is the perceived high levels of drug use and alcoholism, associated with shoplifting and erratic behaviour that disconcerts shoppers on the Main Street. Another is vandalism and graffiti. A further concern is the lack of a visible police presence, especially at times of the day (and evening) when antisocial behaviour is most prevalent

In the Community Survey, public concern with crime was *directly* associated with the closure of the front desk of Cambuslang Police Station.

Second, it is not just perceptions of crime that justify rethinking the closure of Cambuslang Police Station: the **rate of actual crime is also high in Cambuslang**. South Lanarkshire Council's data for public order and community safetyⁱⁱⁱ show that the rate of SIMD-recorded crimes is substantially above the averages for South Lanarkshire and for Scotland as a whole; as you will probably be aware, SIMD areas make up a substantial part of Cambuslang West and the neighbouring ward of Cambuslang East. The rate of so-called 'miscellaneous offences' for Cambuslang is also worryingly high by comparison with the Scottish average, a category of offences that includes assault, breach of the peace, drunkenness and disorderly conduct, and urinating. It is particularly these types of offences that cause distress and insecurity to local people using Cambuslang Main Street and the public parks (Cambuslang Park, Holmhill Wood Community Park). These offences should be police priorities given the commitments made in the Cambuslang Multi Member Ward Police Plan 2016 published on your website.

A compounding factor is the rapid increase in housing and population in Cambuslang. During the 2000s, the population of Cambuslang increased by some 5,000 people and is projected to increase by a further 6,000 by 2029.^{iv} At present, for example, there are three new housing developments approved or under construction (Gilbertfield, West Greenlees and the former Hoover site). The rise in population is associated with an increase in the potential for offences, as well as other requirements for police support. An analysis which we undertook in 2015 showed that trends in public order in Cambuslang fluctuated annually but most were higher in 2014 than in 2010 (especially violence, anti-social behaviour and health/wellbeing-linked crimes). These trends are a compelling argument to strengthen the physical police presence in Cambuslang not reduce it.

Third, the closure of the front-desk of Cambuslang Police Station, and now the proposed closure of the entire station, are contributing to deep-seated public unease in the community about the **centralisation of policing and perceptions of diminishing local accountability**. Decisions such as the ones relating to Cambuslang Police Station are being taken without adequate involvement of, or reference to, the views and interests of the local community. Your request for views on a decision that appears to have been already taken is no substitute for full and ongoing engagement with bodies like Cambuslang Community Council (and other community interests) on the decision-making about the policing of our community.

Fourth, you justify the closure of Cambuslang Police Station with reference to improving front-line policing. Frankly, we consider that **a local police station is a critical component of frontline policing**. We recognise that you are intending to ensure continued local police patrols in Cambuslang, but the physical presence of a police station acts as an important symbol of reassurance for the local

community. You will surely be aware of the significance of local police stations, in achieving 'reassurance policing' and reducing the *perceptions* and *fear* of crime as well as reducing actual crime.

A decade ago, commentators were warning that^v

"a primary consequence of the shift to target-led policing has been a haemorrhaging of support for the local police particularly where it applies to the demand for not just a visible but a meaningful, verifiable police presence in communities....The devaluing instead of revaluing of the office of police constable and 'blue lamp' police stations are amongst the clearest manifestations of impoverished thinking about British policing brought about by performance management."

We appreciate that you are under pressure of constrained resources and targets, but rationalising the police estate in the way that you are proposing will do nothing to provide reassurance to the people and businesses of Cambuslang. It will undermine local support and confidence in the police at a time when it is sorely needed and runs counter to your stated commitment to community policing.

Lastly, you need to be aware of the wider context of **public services and the viability of town centres**. It is Scottish Government policy to strengthen the resilience of town centres. Yet, we have seen a succession of decisions by public sector agencies and private sector businesses to close premises, rationalise services and relocate activities to larger towns. This is all too evident in Cambuslang where the lack of joined-up thinking in the (re)location of public services and employment is damaging the sustainability of our town centre. The strategy of Police Scotland to focus on the costs of its property without considering the wider community impact of its estate-rationalisation plans is a serious policy flaw for a 'public service' particularly in Cambuslang town centre which has suffered more than most.

We hope that you will take the above comments seriously and that you will reconsider not just the closure of Cambuslang Police Station but also reinstating the front desk service. If the current building is too large and/costly, you might consider taking over a vacant shop unit on the north side of Cambuslang Main Street as a base to provide a reassuring daytime police presence and a point of contact for the people of Cambuslang. We would be grateful for the opportunity to meet you before the closure plans proceed any further to discuss the above issues in more detail.

Yours sincerely,



David Thomson
Chair, Cambuslang Community Council

cc.
Margaret Ferrier MP
Clare Haughey MSP
South Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership
Halfway Community Council

ⁱ <http://www.cambuslangcommunitycouncil.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Cambuslang-Community-Survey-Report-final3.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.cambuslangcommunitycouncil.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Cambuslang-Business-Survey-final.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ *Public Order and Community Safety Profile for Cambuslang*, South Lanarkshire Council.

^{iv} *General Register Office for Scotland. Clydeplan Strategic Housing Estimates*, 2015.

^v McLaughlin, E. (2008). 'Last One Out, Turn Off the "Blue Lamp"': The Geographical 'Placing' of Police Performance Management. *Policing*, 2(3), 266-275.