

OBAN

**LEGALISED POLICE
CELLS**

VISITING COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT

2009/2010

ANNUAL REPORT 2009/2010

OBAN LEGALISED POLICE CELLS VISITING COMMITTEE

FOREWORD

Oban Police Station is one of the 9 Police Stations in Scotland to have Legalised Police Cells and is one of three within Argyll and Bute. The Station is approximately 100 miles from the nearest prison over roads which in parts are narrow and twisting and in parts pass through remote highland glens. The travel conditions on these roads can be hazardous particularly over the winter months and are subject to closure for several hours due to road traffic accidents and landslips.

These unpredictable closures, could result in prisoners being late for Court because they have had to make a long detour or just been held up in traffic. On a return journey they could be very late getting back to prison making their day extremely long and tiring.

Members continue to seek a review of the Legalised Police Cells and their Visiting Committees to take into account the change in usage since the introduction of the private Prisoner Escort Service which has resulted in VC members no longer having any prisoner contact or any committed prisoners being held in the police cells. The last year that there were committed prisoners in the cells was 2007/2008.

During the year 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2010 an agreement was reached between SPS the Scottish Court Service, Strathclyde Police and Reliance whereby the Court Service, on Court Days, lease from Strathclyde Police the upper floor cells in the Police Station for the detention of prisoners awaiting Court appearance or return to prison having been sentenced.

FOREWARD
Cont./

While this arrangement appears to be working well and we assume is beneficial to the prisoners as they are no longer held in the vehicles. When the arrangements were finalised the VC members checked with SPS to establish if they could access the leased cells while being used by the Court Service and were advised that they could not, despite being able to inspect these cells when not in use by the SCS. As a result the members are still unable to have any contact with the prisoners.

Members are of the opinion that prisoners no longer have access to an independent body should they have a complaint or expression of concern, as they had through the Legalised Police Cells Visiting Committee system. A request has been made to meet the Monitoring Team but as yet there has been no response to this.

MEMBERSHIP

Oban Legalised Police Cell's Visiting Committee constituted under Rule 164 of the Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 2006. In terms of Schedule 3 of the Rules the Committee comprises of three members all of whom are appointed by Argyll and Bute Council and are non-elected members.

During the year 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010 there has been no changes to the membership and the members remain as Mr. Ian Smyth, Chair and representative on the Association of Prison Visiting Committees, Mr. Kenneth McIntyre, Depute Chair and Mr. Alexander Cameron. Mrs. Isabella Soudan continues as Clerk.

**STRATHCLYDE
POLICE**

Chief Inspector Glen Bland was appointed to the post of Chief Inspector in January 2010 and Julie Edwards was appointed to the Post of Inspector and replaced Inspector Neil Wallace who has moved to a new position away from Oban.

The Committee would like to record their appreciation to Inspector Wallace for his valuable support during his time in Oban Station.

MEETINGS

During the year 1st April 2009 to 31 March 2010 the Committee met on 3 occasions at Oban Police Station, and Member's attendances at these meetings were –

Mr. Smyth 3 meetings,

Mr. McIntyre 3 meetings,

Mr. Cameron 2 meetings

Mr. Smyth continues to serve as an elected representative on the Executive Committee of the Association of Prison Visiting Committees, with responsibility for budget and finance. He has attended as many of the Association of Prison Visiting Committee Meetings as finance has permitted.

The lack of adequate funding continues to trouble the committee as while the travel and subsistence rates were increased in April the budget has remained unchanged.

CELLS

The six male and one female cell in Oban Police Station are located over two floors. The female cell, which is on the top floor, is separated from the other cells by a grille gate when in use.

Each cell contains a concrete plinth and a stainless steel toilet, but has no modesty screen or hand washing facilities within the cell. While these facilities might not be ideal for the Committed or Remand Prisoner we have to accept that these cells are more generally used for custody prisoners. There have been no committed or remand prisoners in the lower floor cells in the past year. Legalised prisoners have been held in the upper floor cells but as these cells are at that time leased to the Scottish Court Service the committee members have no right of access to these cells during that time.

CELLS

Cont./

During the year 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010 the cells were inspected on 11 occasions, as follows –

Ian Smyth - 4,

Kenneth McIntyre – 3,

Alexander Cameron – 4

Generally the Cells were found to be in a clean and tidy condition.

In February a fire was started in a cell by a female custody prisoner but this was promptly and efficiently dealt with. The ceiling in the stairwell continues to give problems and has been repaired during the year.

**PRISONER
TRANSPORT**

Reliance Custodial Services continue to undertake the prisoner escort service.

Members continue to express concern over the fact that prisoners could be faced with this lengthy journey on consecutive days if a Court was not concluded in one day. Their day could be lengthened even further if there were any delays on the road whether coming to Oban or returning to prison thereby increasing the amount of time that prisoners would have to sit in the very cramped space in the Reliance vehicle.

**LEGALISED
PRISONERS**

Committed or remand prisoners coming to Oban are no longer held in the Reliance vans but are detained in the upper floor cells of the Police Station. This arrangement is down to an agreement being reached between Strathclyde Police, Scottish Courts Service, Scottish Prison Service and Reliance Custodial Service.

This arrangement appears to be working well and there is a definite advantage to the prisoners as they have more space to move around when in the cell.

The Lack of prisoner contact continues to be a matter of concern for the members.

LEGALISED PRISONERS
Cont./

In the year from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010 there were no committed prisoners detained in the cells. The last year in which committed prisoners were held under the care of Strathclyde Police was 2008/2009.

BEDDING, ETC.

Each prisoner is supplied with a clean issue of towels and bedding which are of good quality.

LAUNDRY FACILITIES

A local contractor provides a very effective laundry service with the Police delivering and collecting the laundry as required

WASHING FACILITIES

There is a shower unit and washbasin on each floor with the female prisoners using the upper floor facilities. Toiletries as required are supplied by Strathclyde Police but as there are no legalised prisoners there is little call for this.

The Station now provides liquid soap dispensers and these are more hygienic than the communal bar.

MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS

If required a local General Practitioner would carry out medical Examinations. The local hospital is within easy reach of the Police Station should this facility be required but this has never been used in the life of the Committee. There is also an air ambulance service from the hospital should it be required.

TRANSLATORS AND ETHNIC REQUIREMENTS

Strathclyde Police have ready access to translators if required and hold a stock of prayer mats, compasses and washbasins, but to date, none of these have ever been used.

OUTSIDE EXERCISE FACILITY

With there being no legalised prisoners using the Station exemption from Rule 85 of the Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 2006 does not raise any concerns.

**FOOD
PROVISION**

Any prisoners requiring food receive meals from a local hotel that provide meals as required and these are good quality and meet all dietary requirements. If specialist food is required and cannot be provided by the normal supplier Strathclyde Police source this from elsewhere.

Prisoners in the care of Reliance are fed by them.

**FIRE
PRECAUTIONS**

Written procedures are in place for evacuation and secure custody of prisoners in the event of a fire and regular fire drills are carried out.

CLOTHING

While a small supply of clothing is available in the Station this is sometimes not suitable for the needs of the prisoner and the local British Red Cross shop and WRVS help out with clothing in cases of emergency.

**COMPLAINTS/
GRIEVANCE
PROCEDURES**

A supply of Complaints and Grievance Procedure forms are held in the Station, and the Committee are pleased to report that these have never been used since the Committee was formed 12 years ago.

**READING
MATERIALS**

On request prisoners are supplied with daily newspapers and a small selection of donated reading materials is available for use by the prisoners.

**VISITING
COMMITTEE
AWARNNESS**

A Solicitor's room is available for routine visits and interviews and notices informing prisoners of the Visiting Committee are displayed in the cell area and at the Charge Desk but as the legalised and remand prisoners are never in the Station they cannot see the notices.

**MAJOR
INCIDENTS**

There have been no major incidents within the cells during the year.

SUMMARY

The Committee would like to record their thanks to Chief Inspector Glen Bland. Inspector Julie Edwards, Inspector Neil Wallace, and all staff at Oban Police Station for their assistance and co-operation throughout the year.

Signed *Ian Smyth* Chair

Date *13 September 2010*