

**OBAN**

**LEGALISED POLICE**

**CELLS**

**VISITING COMMITTEE**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**2012/2013**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2012/2013**

### **OBAN LEGALISED POLICE CELLS VISITING COMMITTEE**

Legalised Police Cells (LPC's), which are unique to certain parts of Scotland, derive historically from the inaccessibility of the Scottish Courts in outlying districts and islands. These police cells have been "legalised" and as such are used to hold prisoners awaiting trial locally, or who have been returned from prison for sentencing or following conviction, pending transfer to prison. Prisoners held in the LPC's are detained under the provisions of the Prison and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 2011.

Oban Police Station is approximately a 200 mile round trip from the nearest prison, and the prisoners have to make journeys over roads which are in poor condition and are often subject to lengthy closures and major landslips which result in very long detours or delays.

With Strathclyde Police having almost no responsibility for committed prisoners it may be necessary on occasions for prisoners to make this long journey on two or more consecutive days if the Court did not conclude.

The LPC's are inspected triennially by H.M Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland and were last inspected on 6 July 2011. Prisoners held in the LPC's are detained under the provisions of the Prison and Young Offenders Institution (Scotland) Rules (2011).

During the year the Committee met at Oban Police Station, on only two occasions as there were insufficient funds available to hold any further meetings.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Oban Legalised Police Cell's Visiting Committee constituted under Rule 155 of the Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 2011. 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. Membership has remained unchanged throughout the year with 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.

## **MEETINGS**

During the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 to 31 March 2013 the Committee met on 2 occasions at Oban Police Station. Member's attendance at these meetings was as follows, Mr. Smyth - 2, Mr. McIntyre - 1, and Mr. Cameron – 2.

The lack of adequate funding remains a constant concern for the committee as while the travel and subsistence rates were increased the budget was not and like the cells in remote areas these Committees are expensive to operate due to the cost of travel.

## **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.

On Court days, The Scottish Court Service lease from Strathclyde Police the upper floor cells at Oban Police Station an arrangement which allows the prisoners more space to move around while waiting to appear in Court or return to prison. While this arrangement works well The Court Authorities continue to seek a more permanent solution either by building Court Cells or constructing a stairway to separate the upper floor cells from the ground floor. This arrangement does not however give the Committee Members access to speak with the prisoners as while members can inspect the cells either before or after they have been occupied by the legalised prisoners, they are not allowed entry when the cells are occupied.

During the year 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013 the cells were inspected on only 1 occasion by Mr. Kenneth McIntyre. Members agreed that they would not carry out inspections as they were achieving nothing other than an inconvenience to the Police staff.

## **PRISONER TRANSPORT**

Since January 2012 G4S provide the Prisoner Escort Service.

## **LEGALISED PRISONERS**

The lack of prisoner contact has been a concern to the members for several years now but without a change in their remit the members can see no solution to this.

During the period from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013 no committed prisoners were detained in the lower floor cells of Oban Police Station under the care of Strathclyde Police.

## **BEDDING, ETC.**

All prisoners are supplied with a clean issue of towels and bedding by Strathclyde Police and all are of good quality.

## **LAUNDRY FACILITIES**

Laundry services are provided by a local contractor 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 are supplied by Strathclyde Police but with no legalised prisoners using the cells there is no call for these.

Liquid soap dispensers have replaced the communal bar of soap as it was felt that this was more hygienic.

## **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. All medicines are kept in

proper medical boxes.

-4-

### **TRANSLATORS AND ETHNIC REQUIREMENTS**

Strathclyde Police have ready access to translators if required and hold prayer mats, compasses and washbasins, but to date, none of these have ever been used. A bible is also available.

### **OUTSIDE EXERCISE FACILITY**

As there are no legalised prisoners using the Police Cells exemption from Rule 85 of the Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 2011 does not raise any concerns.

### **FOOD PROVISION**

If a committed prisoner required to be fed appropriate meals would be obtained from a local hotel that supplies good quality food and meets all dietary requirements. If specialist food is required and cannot be supplied by the normal supplier Strathclyde Police would source this from elsewhere. Disposable cutlery is provided by Strathclyde Police.

Food required by prisoners in the care of G4S is sourced and/or provided by them.

### **FIRE PRECAUTIONS**

Written procedures are in place for evacuation and secure custody of prisoners in the event of a fire. Regular fire drills and weekly Fire Alarm tests are carried out and logged.

### **CLOTHING**

The local British Red Cross shop and/or WRVS help supplement the small supply of clothing which is held in the Station.

## **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.

-5-

## **READING MATERIALS**

A small selection of donated reading materials is available for use by the prisoners and daily newspapers are provided if requested.

## **VISITING COMMITTEE AWARENESS**

A Solicitor's room is available for routine visits and interviews and notices informing prisoners of the Visiting Committee and their Prisoner Rights are displayed at the Charge Desk, but as the legalised and remand prisoners are never in the Station they cannot see the notices. The practice of posting notices in the cells has been stopped as these were being continually ripped off and if chewed were deemed a risk.

## **MAJOR INCIDENTS**

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

## **SUMMARY**

The Committee would like to record their thanks to all staff at Oban Police Station for their assistance and co-operation throughout the year.

Signed *Ian Smyth*

Chair

Date 27 June 2013

