

OBAN

**LEGALISED POLICE
CELLS**

VISITING COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT

2011/2012

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Legalised Police Cells (LPC's) are unique to Scotland and these came about from the inaccessibility of the Scottish Courts to the outlying districts and islands. These cells are used to retain prisoners awaiting local trial, or following conviction, pending transfer to prison. Oban Police Station is approximately a 200 mile round trip from the nearest prison, and is over roads which are in poor condition and are subject to lengthy closures and major landslips which result in very long detours or delays. Since the introduction of the Private Prisoner Escort Service members have continued to express their Concerns over the long journeys which prisoners have to make from prison to the Oban Court and if convicted the return journey all in the one day in the restricted confines of the vehicles.

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 one occasion as there were insufficient funds available to hold any further meetings. When the funds were depleted the Clerk emailed SPS requesting permission to hold a meeting at her own expense but having received no reply she did not proceed.

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. This arrangement works well while The Court Authorities continue to seek a more suitable arrangement either by building Court Cells or inserting a stairway to separate the upper floor cells from the ground floor.

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 1st April 2011 to 31 March 2012 the Committee met on 1 occasion at Oban Police Station, and all three Members attended. Mr. Mick Armstrong from HMCIP who was in Oban to carry out the triennial inspection of the cells was also in attendance as the meeting.

The lack of adequate funding is a constant source of trouble for the committee as while the travel and subsistence rates were increased the budget was not. Like the cells in remote areas these Committees are expensive to operate due mainly 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.

During the year 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012 the cells were inspected on 2 occasions and on each occasion were found to be clean and tidy.

PRISONER TRANSPORT

In January 2012 Reliance Custodial Services were replaced by G4S as the Prisoner Escort Service and the transition worked well as many of the Reliance staff transferred and was familiar with the route.

LEGALISED PRISONERS

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

During the period from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012 no committed prisoners were detained in the lower floor cells of Oban Police Station under the care of Strathclyde Police. The last year in which committed prisoners were held in the Station under the care of Strathclyde Police was 2010/2011.

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 and works very efficiently 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.

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.

READING MATERIALS

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

-5-

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 1 December 2012