

Council meeting abandoned due to lack of councillors

A MEETING attended by emergency service chiefs had to be cancelled at the last minute after not enough councillors turned up.

The meeting of East Lothian Council's Police, Fire and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee was due to hear reports on police and fire and rescue activity in the county.

However Councillor Jim Goodfellow, committee convener, had to issue an apology at the start of the meeting as he cancelled it due to a lack of elected councillors in attendance.

Four of the committee's eight members sent apologies leaving it inquorate which means there were not enough members to make a decision.

Mr Goodfellow told those in attendance: "The only way to proceed would be to suspend Standing Orders but we can only suspend Standing Orders if we are quorate."

The scrutiny committee which is the only public forum where police and fire service chiefs report back to councillors about their work and answer questions only meets twice a year.

The next scheduled meeting is in May 2019.

Among those who attended the meeting was Chief Superintendent Lesley Clark, divisional commander for Lothians and Scottish Borders Police and area commander for East Lothian Chief Inspector Steven Duncan.

They were due to present a report on crime in the county from April to September this year which revealed a sharp rise in sex crimes to more than double the five year average during

that period.

Their report revealed that 111 crimes were reported compared to the average of 52 although it attributed the increase to historic abuse reports.

It said "one operation alone resulted in over 20 crimes being recorded against the same suspect dating over the last 20 years. At least four enquiries into historic domestic abuse have seen multiple offences recorded under both sexual crime and violence."

The report also revealed that while the number of domestic abuse incidents reported had rise by over 20 per cent the number of incidents resulting in a crime being reported had fallen by 4.6 per cent.

There was also a fall in anti-social behaviour, racially aggravated conduct and road casualties.

Area manager for Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Local Senior Officer Stephen Gourlay was there to present a report which revealed that while the number of false alarms attended had fallen over the period compared to the previous year, deliberate fires continued to increase in numbers.'

East Lothian Council said new dates for the meeting had already been circulated.