



Agenda Item 7

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Authority Meeting</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>21 June 2023</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Apex Grassmarket, Edinburgh</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>Forensic Services Director's report</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>Fiona Douglas, Director of Forensic Services</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For discussion</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	<b>No</b>

**PURPOSE**

To update members on the recent key activities across Forensic Services.

## 1. Updates

### **Budget**

- 1.1. The final Forensic Services 2023-24 settlement has allowed Forensic Services to move ahead with our plans to implement our New Operating Model. To balance this year's budget we have identified and are committed to deliver the savings identified through our Forensic Services Efficiencies Plan - which will meet the gap between the original approved business case and the final budget. As these savings are delivered we will reinvest in the implementation of our New Operating Model.
- 1.2. As part of the New Operating Model, the Forensic Services National Scenes Tasking Unit, based in Rushton Court, Dundee, went live on 3 April 2023 and is now fully up and running. The unit acts as a single point of contact for Police Scotland when requesting scene examination attendance and is responsible for reviewing all scene attendance requests submitted and the subsequent deployment of scene examiners throughout Scotland.
- 1.3. This is a considerable investment in staff and resources in Dundee. The team, comprising of 12 tasking unit officers, provide a seven-day service covering 06.30-22.30 hours. The Scenes Tasking Unit officers were appointed well in advance of the go-live date so they could complete a rigorous training programme, facilitated by scene examination colleagues, and there was extensive external and internal engagement about the new unit.

### **Forensic Services Performance Framework**

- 1.4. Forensic Services have engaged with SPA Strategy and Performance to assist in the development of our Performance Framework. A workshop-type approach was used which allowed Forensic Services to identify the key measures aligned to each outcome, rationale for the measures, baselines and targets, as well as consideration of benchmarking opportunities.
- 1.5. A session was held with SPA Board Members and SPA Corporate in January 2023 to refine and develop further the framework, ensuring that it aligns with the key priorities of the wider criminal justice system and translates into meaningful measures relevant to the communities of Scotland.
- 1.6. Wider stakeholder engagement has taken place with discussions at the Forensic Performance Improvement Group (FPIG) in April 2023.

The approach to develop the Performance Framework is shown in diagram 1 below:

Diagram 1:- Development of the Performance Framework- our approach



- 1.7 The draft Performance Framework attached provides a more strategic view of performance, with internal supporting documents and governance to review our delivery of our Strategic Outcomes at a more detailed level. The intention is that, once approved, progress will be reported through the Forensic Performance Operational Group (FPOG), FPIG and FS Committee, and other forums as appropriate.

### **UKAS visits**

- 1.7. UKAS completed their initial assessment of our new Post Mortem Toxicology laboratory in Govan, Glasgow, on 29th March, and recommended an extension to scope for alcohol analysis accreditation – subject to close out of findings. There was also an acknowledgement by UKAS of the large amount of work that has been undertaken to deliver the successful transfer of the Post Mortem Toxicology service and a recognition of the significant work to set up the new laboratory and the commitment of staff and colleagues across Forensic Services and Police Scotland to make this all happen.
- 1.8. While on 27 March, UKAS also visited Howdenhall, Edinburgh, for an update on the progress the Forensic Services Toxicology team have made over the past few months since their last visit. UKAS

recognised the significant progress that has been made, that further work and delivery of the Toxicology Improvement Plan was ongoing, and overall stated this was a positive assessment.

### **HMICS review**

- 1.9. The *HMICS Assurance Review of the Scottish Police Authority Forensic Toxicology Provision* was published on 25<sup>th</sup> April. I fully support the recommendations made and the review's call for a strategic, joint response to improve the delivery of drug-driving services in Scotland and the requirement for significant future investment in Forensic Services and look forward to the substantive discussion in the next item on the agenda today.

### **Strategic Workforce Plan**

- 1.10. The draft second version of the Strategic Workforce Plan (SWFP) has been developed with significant support by Police Scotland People and Development.
- 1.11. The plan sets out the challenges of understanding the future demand for forensic science services from Police Scotland and COPFS and the need to develop a more robust process that allows capacity and services to develop sufficiently in advance of them being required by our partners or the wider justice system.
- 1.12. The budget for Forensic Services supports the establishment and the number and types of posts across the service. Significant increases in demand cannot be easily responded to particularly when these increases are sustained or as a result of unplanned new activity.
- 1.13. This is an initial SWFP for the organisation and there will be more detailed ongoing activity that further:
- Refines the demand forecasting
  - Builds on horizon scanning
  - Incorporates a new research and innovation strategy
  - Utilises more robust information on the workforce within Forensic Services from People and Development

### **Brenda Page murder conviction**

- 1.12. Forensic Scientists worked on and reviewed evidence in the investigation relating to the murder of Dr Brenda Page over a 45-year period. Her family and colleagues commented on how

pertinent and fitting it is that DNA played a part in securing her murder conviction given her research work in the field of DNA.

- 1.13. The Forensic Services cold case team played a significant role in securing the conviction, of her former husband, in March this year for the murder of Dr Page in 1978.

**Policing and Trauma Conference 21 April 2023**

- 1.14. Members of Forensic Services staff joined colleagues from Police Scotland in sharing their own personal trauma experiences and insights as we all work to take steps to try to improve the support staff and officers receive.
- 1.15. Last year Forensic Services launched a three-year project to assess the impact of dealing with traumatic crime scenes has on the mental health of staff. This is part of our commitment in our Forensic Strategy to ensure the wellbeing of Forensic Services staff so they are safe, supported and empowered to deliver world-class forensic services.

**2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

2.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

**3. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 There are no personnel implications in this report.

**4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

**5. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no reputational implications in this report.

**6. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no social implications in this report.

**7. COMMUNITY IMPACT**

7.1 There are no community implications in this report.

**8. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no equality implications in this report.

**9. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are requested to note the information contained within this report.