

Meeting	Forensic Services Committee
Date	24 October 2022
Location	MS Teams
Title of Paper	Forensic Services Director's Report
Presented By	Fiona Douglas, Director Forensic Services
Recommendation to Members	For noting
Appendix Attached	

PURPOSE

To update members on the recent key activities across Forensic Services

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report is to update members on activities across Forensic Services since the last meeting of the Forensic Services Committee.

2. UPDATES**Budget**

- 2.1 I have held a series of meetings with the SPA Chief Executive, the SPA Chair, the Chair of the Forensic Services Committee, members of SPA and others since the Scottish Government indicated it is now reviewing next year's policing budget and is considering a flat-cash settlement.
- 2.2 While a budget for 2023-24 has yet to be agreed, we have had extensive talks about the implications of a flat-cash settlement to the work of Forensic Services which, given the impact of inflation – including the pay award for the current financial year - would in reality be a cut in our overall budget.

Forensic Services Change Programme

- 2.3 At the previous Forensic Services Committee in August Forensic Services reported that we were in the process of advertising 41 new posts as part of the implementation of our change programme. This followed an agreement with Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (JNCC), extensive consultation with staff over the past few years and approval of the Full Business Case by the SPA on 29 September 2021.
- 2.4 Given the unclear budgetary position at present, we have had to review taking some of these posts forward at the current time. These posts are being reviewed on a week-by-week basis but we will only move forward to recruitment when we are sure we have funding to do so. We are also looking at the further implications a flat-cash settlement would have on our implementation and benefits realisation plans for the whole of the change programme.

Performance

- 2.5 While the performance report highlights the changes in the past quarter, Forensic Services have delivered significant planned improvements during the past year to be in as strong a position as possible as we move into the implementation phase of the Operating Model.
- 2.6 The drugs backlog, for example, is the lowest for many years, at around one third of the level of a year ago. The only exception is the performance in Toxicology, where there is extensive work being undertaken on short and long-term improvements as is reported through the Forensic Toxicology Oversight Group.

Project Weaver

- 2.7 The transfer of Post Mortem Toxicology services to Forensic Services remains on track for the 1 December 2022. The new laboratory is now being finalised, after a £6m Scottish Government investment, for the move by staff currently working at University of Glasgow.
- 2.8 Thanks to joint and flexible working agreed between the University, COPFS and Forensic Services they will transfer with no backlog of cases. The University staff have been able to fulfil the timeliness requirements of the current COPFS contract while working to

support the transfer with assistance from seconded Forensic Services colleagues.

- 2.9 Negotiations are still under way with the trade unions, the University of Glasgow Human Resources and SPA/PS People & Development for the smooth transfer of the staff under TUPE regulations. A formal opening for the new site is expected in the New Year and staff across Forensic Services have been involved in suggesting a name for what will become the fifth main Forensic Services laboratory site and the latest since the opening of the Scottish Crime Campus nearly a decade ago.

Biometrics

- 2.8 The first Biometrics Code of Practice for Scotland will take legal effect from 16 November 2022 having been approved by the Scottish Parliament. SPA/Police Scotland and PIRC are all legally required to comply with the Code.
- 2.9 Forensic Services have been working closely with the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner and will be communicating with all FS staff about the role of the Commissioner and their responsibilities under the Code of Practice.

UKAS visits

- 2.10 The UKAS Surveillance assessment of Forensic Services started with visits to Aberdeen on the 11 October and will continue in Dundee, Edinburgh and Scottish Crime Campus until November.
- 2.11 The 2021 UKAS accreditation assessment programme was completed on 10 Aug with renewal of the Forensic Services UKAS accreditation for another four years - the 24th consecutive year of accreditation in Forensic Services.

International and academic collaboration

- 2.11 Forensic Services have been taking part in a joint project validating the use of Virtual Reality for recording fire scenes and demonstrate the competencies of Fire Investigators.
- 2.12 This month Forensic Services colleagues joined with teams from the Danish Police Fire Investigation Unit, Scottish Fire and Rescue

Service and the Leverhulme Research Centre for Forensic Science at Dundee University for a Collaborative Fire Investigation Exercise.

Cold case reviews

- 2.13 Forensic Services are currently supporting over twenty Police Scotland cold case reviews of unsolved murder cases, some of which go back as far as the 1970s. The FS Cold Case Review Service works closely with Police Scotland to see if there are any new forensic science opportunities when the cases are reviewed.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this paper.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this paper.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no reputational implications associated with this paper.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no social implications associated with this paper.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 8.1 There are no community implications associated with this paper.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no equality implications associated with this paper.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this paper.

RECOMMENDATION

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