



Agenda Item 3.1

Meeting	Forensic Services Committee
Date	5th February 2024
Location	Via MS Teams
Title of Paper	Forensic Services Director's report
Presented By	Fiona Douglas, Director of Forensic Services
Recommendation to Members	For discussion
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

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

1. Updates

Budget underspend

- 1.1. Forensic Services continue to forecast an underspend budget position for the 2023/24 - reporting a slight revenue underspend of £0.5 million for Q3 – which has been caused by staff recruitment taking longer to deliver than had been budgeted.
- 1.2. Capital spend for the full-year is now forecast to be well under the original budget with a Q3 forecast for the full-year of £0.8 million – compared with the original full-year budget of £1.76 million. During the year the capital budget has been reduced and this underspend will be used to support the overall SPA budget position.

Benefits Realisation Plan

- 1.3. The Forensic Services Benefits Dashboard is introduced for the first time in the Change Programme Paper (Item 5). The benefits management framework makes a distinction between project and portfolio/programme level. While benefits will continue to be tracked at project level they will be consolidated into a single dashboard for reporting at Forensic Services Change Programme Board and Forensic Services Committee.
- 1.4. Delivering benefits is the reason we have embarked upon our Forensic Services Strategic Change Programme. Forensic Services want to demonstrate that, as a result of the changes we have introduced, we have improved how we work and are on track to deliver a more flexible and responsive service with faster results, particularly in acquisitive crime.

Senior Management Team recruitment

- 1.5. We are currently in the process of recruiting for a new Head of Function to replace the Head of Function for National Services Gary Holcroft who retires this month after 13 years at SPA Forensic Services and a lifetime of public service devoted to working in forensic science. Today is his final Forensic Services Committee meeting.

Post Mortem Toxicology

- 1.6. Our Post Mortem Toxicology Service continues to show significant improvement in the past few months - the open caseload has reduced by 67% from a peak of 1340 in July to 445 at the end of

December. Turnaround times have been reduced from a high of 173 days in July to 49 days and the target of 35 days for Non-Priority cases is expected to be achieved in January 2024. The 28-day turnaround for priority cases has been met since August 2023.

- 1.7. Forensic Services continue to work closely with Police Scotland Digital Division to look at how to improve networking issues which continue to cause reliability concerns for the equipment at the Moorepark Laboratory.

Drug-driving update

- 1.8. The lack of a sustainable long-term model for drug-driving continues to remain the highest risk that Forensic Services manages. We are working closely with Police Scotland, COPFS and the Scottish Government to manage and minimise risks, ahead of the decision for a long-term, sustainable, solution which will meet future demand.
- 1.9. In the past few months Forensic Services saw a deterioration in the timeliness of provision of drug driving reports from our outsource partner. Concerns were escalated immediately to the Senior Management Team of the outsource partner, who confirmed that unforeseen case processing issues resulted in a delay regarding the reporting of our drug driving cases, beyond the timescale originally agreed.
- 1.10. Extensive dialogue has taken place and Forensic Services have received a firm assurance that the position will not deteriorate further and actions have been taken which have resulted in an immediate improvement in Q4, which is projected to continue and is being monitored weekly from this point onwards. We are working with Police Scotland and COPFS to ensure no cases exceed the current 12-month statutory time limit.

Biometrics internal audit

- 1.11. As part of the 2023/2024 internal audit plan for the Scottish Police Authority, Forensic Services and Police Scotland agreed to perform an audit of compliance with the Code of Practice on the acquisition, retention, use and destruction of biometric data for criminal justice and police purposes in Scotland - as published by the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner.
- 1.12. The audit was able to provide assurance over the design and operational effectiveness of the arrangements in place to comply

with the Scottish Biometrics Commissioners Code of Practice with recommendations which offer opportunities for improvements to be made.

- 1.13. The Biometrics Commissioner for Scotland has published his first annual assessment on compliance with the Scottish Code of Practice by the SPA Forensic Services and his determination for 2023/24 was that the SPA Forensic Services “are using biometric data and technologies in a lawful, effective, and ethical manner and are currently compliant with the Scottish Biometric Commissioner’s Code of Practice”.

UKAS Gen6 compliance

- 1.14. Forensic Services continue to engage with UKAS regarding compliance with UKAS document *GEN6 – ‘Reference to accreditation and multilateral recognition signatory status by UKAS accredited bodies’* and the requirement to document on Forensic Services test reports what activity is accredited and unaccredited. The UKAS GEN6 document is available on [the UKAS website here.](#)

Fugitive deported to USA

- 1.15. Nicholas Rossi, an American suspected of faking his own death and hiding in Scotland, was extradited back to the United States of America at the end of December.
- 1.16. Edinburgh Sheriff Court had heard that fingerprints matched those of Rossi after hearing evidence from a Forensic Services fingerprint expert, and Sheriff Norman McFadyen ruled that the fugitive was Rossi in November 2022.

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.