

Meeting	SPA Authority Meeting
Date	17 January 2020
Location	John McIntyre Centre, Edinburgh
Title of Paper	Vice Chair's Report
Presented By	David Crichton, Vice Chair
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached:	No

PURPOSE

To update Authority Members on activities carried out by the Vice Chair and to offer comment on significant areas of development since the previous Board meeting on 27 November 2019.

This is my first report since assuming the responsibilities of Chair on an interim basis. It is also the Authority's first Board Meeting since our previous Chair, Professor Susan Deacon, resigned on 4 December 2019 and on behalf of myself and my colleagues at the Authority I want to acknowledge the leadership, energy and commitment that Susan demonstrated during her two years in post. We wish her continued success in her current and future roles.

For this and future reports, I will highlight my main activities during the previous month and anticipate the major issues and priorities for the weeks ahead.

Activities

Most of what I have done since taking up post has involved meetings and calls with many of the Authority's key partners and stakeholders. These have included the Cabinet Secretary for Justice, senior officials in Scottish Government, the Chief Constable and his leadership team, the President and Chief Executive of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS), and representatives of the police staff associations and trade unions. I also attended the conference dinner of the Scottish Institute for Policing Research, and spoke to the Institute's Director. Internally, I have spoken to all of our Board members and have spent time working with our Interim Chief Executive and other members of staff. I also attended an all-staff meeting in Pacific Quay.

I will continue with this programme of discussions in the weeks ahead. One objective for these discussions is of course to reassure stakeholders that the Authority's purpose and commitments will be maintained during the interim period until a new Chair is appointed. Just as important however is to continue highlighting the wide range of emerging challenges and opportunities facing both the Authority and policing in Scotland over the next few months, some of which I will touch on below. Dealing with these will require pace and urgency which go beyond simply marking time until a new Chair is in post.

The Authority has a strong Board and talented executive team. I am confident in our ability to play an effective role in the wider system of support and scrutiny in which policing operates, and to help maintain public trust and confidence in our police service. That wider system is of course complex and multi-layered and it is important that a refresh of the governance and accountability framework which we have suggested is taken forward. Nevertheless, I believe that the core principles underlying the system remain robust and can be made to work.

Main events

During December 2019, there were a number of important announcements and publications which materially affect the strategic context in which the Authority operates.

The Scottish Government published its revised Strategic Police Priorities. The Authority was consulted as part of the review of these priorities and we welcome their publication. They will provide the context for the Strategic and Annual Police Plans. The main item of business for our 17 January meeting is in fact the refreshed Strategic Police Plan which has been prepared jointly by the Authority and Police Scotland and which will demonstrably flow from the Government's statement of priorities.

Also in December, Audit Scotland published its Section 22 report on the Authority. We welcome the report's conclusions and recommendations on our financial and governance arrangements and they will form an integral part of our continuing work on improving the Authority's governance and organisational systems. We will do this alongside the HMICS thematic review of the Authority published in September 2019. This also contained recommendations on governance and, where consistent with the Audit Scotland report, these will be incorporated jointly in the improvement work. Additionally, the Auditor General gave evidence on her Section 22 report to Parliament's Public Audit and Post-Legislative Scrutiny Committee (PAPLS) on 9 January. The Auditor General's emphasis on the need to ensure the whole system of policing scrutiny is working effectively rather than focusing only on the role of the Authority was welcome, as were the comments on financial sustainability.

The Authority laid its Annual Report and Accounts in Parliament on 17 December. These were finalised earlier than in previous years, reflecting the improvements made in financial management and reporting over the last two years.

I touched earlier on my meeting with the President and Chief Executive of COSLA and following that meeting I confirmed to COSLA that we would welcome the co-option of a representative of COSLA to our Policing Performance Committee. This is the first time that the Authority will have co-opted an external party on to one of our Committees and it will provide an additional perspective on the local impact and performance of the police service. The co-option procedure will require formal process from both parties and I hope to be able to report on a conclusion at the Authority's February meeting.

Following on from the discussion at our November meeting on legacy issues related to the former Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency, Tom Halpin and I reviewed in confidence the full, unredacted version of the Metropolitan Police Service's peer review on 9 January and I will comment further on that during the meeting.

Existing and emerging challenges

Much remains to be done to address existing challenges facing the Authority and Police Scotland, whilst new ones continually emerge. Some of these are highlighted below.

Financial sustainability

Both the Authority and Police Scotland have highlighted the financial challenge facing policing at recent Board Meetings. The Audit Scotland report further reinforces the risks to financial sustainability. We know that any of the options available for addressing the structural deficit involve difficult choices for the Authority, Police Scotland and Scottish Government. The improved financial understanding and reporting which we now have helps to properly inform those choices but does not make them any easier, and critical decisions will be required in the next few months.

Workforce planning

Given the high proportion of the policing budget that is bound up in employment costs, strategic workforce planning is essential. The lack of such planning has been consistently highlighted by the Authority, Audit Scotland and HMICS. At the Authority's last meeting in November 2019, the Chief Constable committed to putting additional urgency and resource into workforce planning and the Authority will continue to push for and monitor progress in this area.

Oversight of change in policing

Delivering the Strategic Police Plan requires a major programme of transformational change in Scottish policing. Much of this is already underway and producing identifiable outcomes. But it is a complex, multi-faceted programme which requires detailed monitoring and scrutiny both within Police Scotland and by the Authority. Although most elements of the programme are currently overseen by individual parts of our existing governance systems, there is not yet a sufficiently integrated, high-level approach which captures its complexity and interdependencies. The Authority has been aware of this for some time and it has also been highlighted by HMICS and Audit Scotland. A detailed proposal on change oversight will therefore be brought to the

Authority's February meeting for approval and subsequent implementation.

UN Climate Change Conference (COP26)

Glasgow is hosting this event in November of this year and its significance was raised at the Authority's meeting in November. It will be the biggest single event ever held in Scotland, and brings major security, safety, logistical and financial risks. Whilst Police Scotland and the Authority have confidence in the police service's ability to meet its operational responsibilities, the policing costs will be substantial and work is underway to clarify them. Early budget commitments are already having to be incurred. It is essential that the costs of COP 26 are met without detriment to the current budget or to the normal business of policing in Glasgow and the rest of Scotland. This will require detailed discussions with the UK Government and the risks of not fully recovering costs have been reinforced by recent coverage of budget shortfalls for the G8 Summit at Gleneagles in 2005.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

- Discuss and note the information contained within it.