



Forensic Services Committee

10 August 2023

Minutes of the Forensic Services Committee held on 04 May 2023 via MS Teams.

Board Members present:	Paul Edie (Committee Chair) Jane Ryder (Committee Member) Caroline Stuart (Committee Member) Fiona McQueen (Committee Member) Katharina Kasper (Committee Member) Martyn Evans (Board Chair) <i>observed for first hour.</i>
Board Member apologies:	
In attendance:	<u>SPA Forensic Services</u> Fiona Douglas, Director of Forensic Services Vicki Morton, Chief Operating Officer Alan Connell, Scientific Head of Infrastructure and Support Alastair Patience, Head of Function Helen Haworth, Head of Function Craig Donnachie, Head of Quality and Assurance Joanne Tierney, Head of Change & Development Derek Scrimger, Head of Function <u>Crown Office</u> Ruth McQuaid, Procurator Fiscal High Court <u>Police Scotland</u> CS Conrad Trickett, policing in a digital world DCS Raymond Brown, local crime <u>SPA</u> Barry Sillers, Deputy Chief Executive Amanda Coulthard, Head of Strategy and Performance Chris Johnstone, Finance Lead Eleanor Gaw, Governance and External Relations Lead Colette Craig, Governance Support Officer

1. Introductions and Welcome:

1.1 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed attendees and noted a recent HMICS Assurance Review of Scottish Police Authority Forensic Toxicology Provision had been published. The Chair advised that this report will be considered by the full SPA Board in due course.

1.2 Apologies

None

1.3 Declarations of Interest and Connections

There were no declarations of interest or connections.

1.4 Decision on taking business in private (Item 9 – 12)

Members **AGREED** to take items 9, 11 and 12 in private.

Members **AGREED** to take Item 10 from the private session into the public session following their consideration of the report.

2. Minute and Actions from previous meeting:

2.1 Minute from meeting held on 1 February 2023 for approval

Derek Scrimger advised prior to the meeting that he was missing from the list of attendees. The Chair asked that this was updated.

Members **AGREED** the Minute from the Forensic Services Committee on 1 February 2023 was an accurate record of the meeting.

2.2 Rolling Action Log and Matters Arising

Fiona McQueen sought clarity on delivery of actions in relation to the Performance Framework, the proposed presentation of trends (action 20222410-FSC – 003) and timings to discharge actions 20220808-FSC – 003 and 20222504 – FSC – 003. Fiona Douglas (FDouglas) referred to the Biometrics Landscape and advised that the action related to forensic services being able to weed Scottish Fingerprints in compliance with legislation which requires a change to be made in the PNC in England and Wales. A member of staff has been seconded to the Home Office to report this work, however, there was priority one work which queue jumped the planned activity. It is expected that the work to apply changes to the PNC will be completed in July to allow that activity to be undertaken. With regards to Benchmarking,

progress has been made and Derek Scrimger provided an update to members in relation to this. The Chair asked that going forward these updates are provided to members within action logs to ensure robust governance .

20230504-FSC-001: Forensic Services SMT to ensure that sufficient updates relating to ongoing areas of business are provided within action logs.

Members **NOTED** and **AGREED** the written updates provided.

There were no matters arising.

2.3 Decisions since last meeting

There were no decisions since the last meeting.

3. Performance

3.1 Forensic Services Director's Report

FDouglas provided an overview report which informed members on recent key activities across Forensic Services. During discussions the following matters were raised:

Members referred to the Tasking Unit and trauma-enabled work and congratulated the team on the work done within those areas. Members sought clarity on the following:

- Whether efficiency savings were on track as part of the transformation programme.
- How team engagement was being taken forward with staff and trade unions and the response to that.
- How were the out of hours being managed for the tasking unit.
- Whether there is a back log within cold case reviews and is there a requirement for further resources in that area.

FDouglas advised that there is a comprehensive efficiency plan and most of those savings are around non-staff costs, better use of the more expensive materials and consumables, improvements around the use of technology in terms of methods. There is also activity around rationalising the DNA processing facility (4 lab sites being reduce to 2 sites), along with better approaches to invoicing and purchasing. FDouglas advised that there are regular meetings with Trade Union colleagues around the implementation of the New Operating Model, including the Taking Unit. The SMT have a programme of going out to sites to visit staff to allow direct conversation. An oncall system in place for out of hours as and

when required. There is a prioritisation process for cold cases and this prioritisation is dictated by Police Scotland and Crown Office. FDouglas advised that there is not a capacity issue, although there is always a want to be able to do more.

FDouglas advised that there will be a Post Implementation Review which would include benefits realised and lessons learned.

Members **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** the following action:

20230504-FSC-002: Fiona Douglas to ensure that the committee have sight of the Post Implementation Review including benefits realised and lessons learned.

3.2 Forensic Services Performance Report – Q4

FDouglas provided an overview of the Forensic Services Performance Report, Q4 2022/23. During discussions the following matters were raised:

Members were advised that the outsourcing in relation Post Mortem Toxicology would continue until a steady state is achieved, anticipated to be reached by July 2023. The Chair referred to page 9 (Lab Demand against Capacity) and sought assurance that there are no issues around the reported increase in relation capacity. FDouglas advised that due to the introduction of a new way of recording imaging requests into the evidence management system there shows an absence of data, however, assured members that the demand around imaging is stable. The Chair sought clarity on whether or not samples relating to Drug Driving were being batched when outsourced. FDouglas confirmed they were batched to the outsource provider and that they work together on timing for transfer of batches. Alastair Patience (APatience) advised that batches are sent monthly, however, more frequently if required.

Caroline Stuart (CStuart) referred to the new format for the Performance Report in line with the performance framework and encouraged a balance scorecard approach is taken. Having a RAG status for members and partners will ensure that the good information being provided within the report was not lost on the reader. FDouglas agreed the need to tell the story in a simple and clear way and advised that she would be keen to share with members to ensure it captures what they require.

Jane Ryder (JRyder) referred to complaints around service delivery and sought clarity around those complaints. FDouglas advised that Forensic Services are required to refer complaints from the public to the SPA Complaints & Conduct Committee. Craig Donnachie (CDonnachie) advised

that complaints for this quarter related to scene examination and were both now resolved. Effectiveness checks are undertaken on management actions to complaints to ensure action taken is effective.

FMcQueen referred to capacity and sought clarity on whether there was a target for the age of cases and closure of cases. FDouglas advised that there is an output target for each area of Forensic Services which will be reported within the new Performance Report and informed members on the timeliness aspects and challenges faced.

Members **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** the following action;

20230504-FSC-003: Fiona Douglas to ensure that quarterly performance is reported in a balanced scorecard format, including RAG status.

3.3 Drug Driving Update

APatience provided members with an update on progress on the Drug Driving Toxicology Service. During discussions the following matters were raised;

The Chair asked for an update on the commitment in the report that "*All in-house drug driving cases with a pre-2023 incident date are expected to be completed by end April 2023.*". FDouglas advised that there are 8 Section 5a cases that are open in relation to cases that are pre 2023 and 14 section 4 cases for the same period and provided a rationale for that. FDouglas advised that the Section 5a cases would be completed within the next week. Section 4 cases require more detailed and complex testing, therefore they will take longer. Members were advised that some new cases were being taken in-house, with as many as possible being outsourced. The process of outsourcing will continue for a considerable period of time to allow internal capacity to grow. FDouglas advised that by the end of the financial year there should be sufficient in-house capacity to be able to service current levels of demand. It will be the Long Term Sustainable Model that will then address the changes in demand in order to make the legislation as effective as possible.

JRyder referred to expected demand and sought assurance that they are not internal assumptions but expectations from Police Scotland. APatience advised that they work closely with Police Scotland and the demand forecast is based on the best available information. JRyder referred to page 9 where it references the 10 week window of statutory time limit and asked what the ideal timescale would be. APatience advised that in terms of reporting 5a cases the target is 3 months, as agreed as part of the tri-partite arrangement. Similar discussions have been had with the outsource partner and they are also aware of this timescale.

Members **NOTED** the report.

3.4 Forensic Services Financial Monitoring Report Period 11

FDouglas provided members with an update on the financial position of Forensic Services as at the end of P11 (28 February 2023) of the financial year 2022/23. During discussions the following matters were raised;

Members sought clarity around the underspend and were advised that they were primarily in relation to staff costs and the deliberate pause in recruitment. FMcQueen sought clarity on whether the lack of use on capital would have an impact on the Transformation Programme. FDouglas advised that there would be no impact as there is only a small amount of capital associated to the implementation of the model.

CStuart asked for an update on where the cost to serve area of work had reached. Chris Johnstone (CJohnstone) advised that the work is planned in from an SPA finance perspective, with meetings underway in order to develop a framework.

Members **NOTED** the report.

4. Forensic Services Performance Framework

Members were provided with a report which included the draft Forensic Services Performance Framework for review and discussion, prior to going for approval at a future Authority Meeting. During discussions the following matters were raised;

Vicki Morton (VMorton) advised that the frequency of reporting will be dependant on what part of the framework is being reported on as Health and Safety data is well established other areas that require more development. VMorton referred to current data and advised that they do have a significant amount of benchmarking and baseline information, however, they have more quantitative data compared to qualitative.

Members were advised that FS had worked closely with People and Development colleagues within Police Scotland in terms of metrics, using the systems and processes in place within both PS and SPA. Work is ongoing with P&D to enhance the available data. FDouglas agreed with the need to look for areas of synergy between the FS Performance Framework and PS measures.

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CStuart sought clarity on what the approach would be to building this into staff PDR's. FDouglas agreed that ensuring objectives were aligned to team success, is critical however this is still a work in progress.

The Chair sought clarity on when this would be taken to the SPA Board for approval to allow these more detailed reports to be prepared for committee. VMorton advised that she would take members comments offline and give that some consideration and provide an update on the action log.

Members **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** the following action;

20230504-FSC-004: Vicki Morton to consider members comments and provide an update on the framework and progression to the SPA Board for approval.

5. Forensic Services People Update

VMorton provided members with an overview report of People related activities ongoing across Forensic Services. During discussions the following matters were raised;

FMcQueen welcomed the intentional approach to mainstream EDI and sought clarity on how members will see the progress on this. VMorton advised that a further staff survey is being planned to support work on culture; however the intention would be to move forward with a new people plan, and have that communicated and embedded before conducting a further Denison Survey to assess the success and areas for further improvement. FDouglas advised that in addition, Forensic Services have an established Change Agent Network, a group of frontline staff that have a variety of different roles, one being how organisational change is landing on the frontline.

The Chair referred to the Sexism and Misogyny Survey and asked if the feedback had been received. FDouglas advised that the results had been received following the participation of a small number of staff from Forensic Services. FDouglas is committed to looking at that feedback and bring that together with other work to ensure that there is no sexism and misogyny within Forensic Services by taking forward actions as required.

Members **NOTED** the report.

10. Forensic Services Strategic Workforce Plan *(Following agreement at Item 1.5 this item was moved from the private session and taken in public session)*

Members were provided with the final draft Forensic Services Strategic Workforce Plan for review and discussion by Members prior to approval at

a future Authority meeting. During discussions the following matters were raised:

The Chair noted that this plan was for one year and sought clarity on when a longer plan would be progressed. FDouglas advised that within the next 5 to 6 months work would be carried out on the demand forecast to inform a more comprehensive 5 year Strategic Workforce Plan that will fully consider what is required within forensic services long term.

FMcQueen advised that she was keen to see more granular data and details of the plan in the coming months and advised that she would be keen to see what career progression was available for expert specialist roles and the approach to apprenticeships. FDouglas advised that there are no plans around the use of AI within Forensic Services at this stage, however, automated processing is an area they will look at, particularly in toxicology. FDouglas advised that career progression is at the heart of the development of the new operating model with more roles available to allow that progression. FDouglas advised that the intention is to look at an Apprenticeship Development Pipeline that allows for the improvement of diversity in forensic science, particularly for support areas in the organisation. Although graduate apprenticeships is not an option for Forensic Science, through the use of apprenticeships they will look to fund sponsorship for staff to gain a degree qualification. FDouglas advised that although work is ongoing with colleagues in Police Scotland, on apprenticeships will need to start from scratch in engaging with the college sector. Alan Connell (AConnell) advised that they have met with Skills Development Scotland who are the route into a modern apprenticeship as they will canvas the colleges on Forensic Services' behalf.

FDouglas advised that further work would be required around demand forecasting before this can be progressed. The Shortlife Working Group will progress for the next 5-6 months, and it is anticipated that a fuller plan would be available for the next financial year. The Chair asked that SPA Forensics fully engage with SPA Workforce Governance colleagues on this piece of work. Members endorsed the approach so far and will welcome a further update in due course.

Members **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** the following action:

20230405-FSC – 005: Fiona Douglas to ensure that SMT are fully engaged with SPA Workforce Governance Colleagues on this piece of work.

6. Project Weaver – Outcome Report

Members were provided with a closure report presented by AConnell. During discussions the following matters were raised;

The Chair sought assurance that equipment is now being used and fully functional following previous delays. AConnell advised about 90% of instrumentation is currently live as some items of kit required snagging work to be done. Delays in getting some instruments installed was due to the economy and supply chain at that time, with a lot of the kit coming from overseas. The Chair sought clarity over networking issues mentioned in the report and asks what risks were associated and mitigations in place. AConnell explained the rationale around the networking issues with BT and Police Scotland however assured members that they were granular issues being dealt with on the ground.

The Chair noted the complexity of the project and congratulated all those involved.

Members **NOTED** the report

7. Forensic Services Change Programme Update

Joanne Tierney (JTierney) provided members were provided with a report which updating them on the progress of the Forensic Services Change Programme. During discussions the following matters were raised;

CStuart sought clarity on what was being done to mitigate risk around capacity as she had concerns around this project being able to start if approved by the Resources Committee. JTierney advised that working alongside AConnell they were identifying efficiencies and how they are addressing the use of current systems. JTierney advised that the core operating system was fundamental to underpinning the success of benefits realisation associated with the operating model. If they were unsuccessful in receiving authority to progress that there would be a need to reframe the timeframe for the benefits associated with the operating model, taking longer to deliver. FDouglas advised that capacity to change is something the organisation are aware of and noted the need to be pragmatic in their approach. FDouglas added that discussions would be difficult due to the current climate, however, there is a need to set themselves up to succeed and do that in a phased manner that addresses the core priority areas initially.

JRyder noted that whatever system was being adopted the data migration required to be a major part of the project. JTierney assured members that there is a wealth of work being done in this area and they will be in a position to clearly articulate data migration requirements

Members **NOTED** the report

8. Digital Forensics Next Steps, Accreditation and Timeline for Progression

Chief Superintendent Conrad Trickett (CSCTrickett) provided Police Scotland's 6 monthly update on progress towards obtaining ISO 17025 within Digital Forensics. During discussions the following matters were raised;

JRyder noted the extended timeline and the role of Forensic Services on a consultancy basis due to their experience around assurance and accreditation. She sought clarity on when this becomes Police Scotland business as usual. CSCTrickett advised that he if it is assumed that accreditation will be gained in February 2024 for Aberdeen, the UKAS team will come back every 6 months to check on progress, therefore the business as usual and quality management approach will be instigated from that point. CSCTrickett advised that Police Scotland are alive to the challenges and complexities ahead, particularly as technology changes in the coming years.

Members were supportive of the direction of travel and discussed whether the forensic services committee was the correct forum in terms of governance. FDouglas advised that there are shared challenges around digital, physical forensics and the issues around regulation. FDouglas added that from a risk point there are synergies that make it useful and valuable for the FSC to have sight on this area of business.

Members **NOTED** the report.