SCOTTISH POLICE AUTHORITY
ÙGHDARRAS POILIS NA H-ALBA

Authority Meeting

27 November 2025

Minutes of the Authority Meeting held on Thursday 25 September 2025 at COSLA, Edinburgh

Board Members present:	Fiona McQueen (Chair) Chris Creegan Paul Edie Tom Halpin Alasdair Hay Pauline Howie Katharina Kasper Angela Leitch Mary Pitcaithly
Board Member apologies:	None
In attendance:	**Scottish Police Authority** Lynn Brown, Chief Executive Karen Vallance, Governance Support Officer **Police Scotland** Chief Constable Jo Farrell Deputy Chief Constable Jane Connors Deputy Chief Constable Alan Speirs **Forensic Services** Fiona Douglas, Director

1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

1.1 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all Authority Members and representatives from Police Scotland's senior leadership team.

1.2 APOLOGIES

There were no Member apologies.

1.3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND CONNECTIONS

One declaration of interest was raised. Chris Creegan declared an interest in Item 7 in respect of his previous role as Vice Chair of the Equality Diversity, Inclusion and Human Rights Independent Review Group.

1.4 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Authority Members raised no other business.

1.5 DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE (ITEMS 10-12)

Members agreed that, in accordance with paragraph 20 of the SPA Standing Orders, the Authority would consider items 9 and 10 in private for the reasons set out on the agenda.

2. MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 MINUTE FROM MEETING HELD ON 21 AUGUST 2025 FOR APPROVAL

Members approved the minute from the meeting held 21 August 2025.

2.2 ROLLING ACTION LOG

Members agreed to close the action on the log.

The Chair reiterated the Authority's support and appreciation to Police Scotland's leadership team for their candour and commitment to scrutiny at public Authority and Committee meetings for all matters for which they are held to account. She highlighted that public accountability in policing is linked to trust and confidence in the service and strengthens relationships and cooperation.

2.3 DECISIONS SINCE LAST MEETING

Members noted no decisions had been taken by correspondence since the last public Authority meeting.

3. SPA CHAIR'S REPORT

Members considered the report which detailed activities carried out by the Chair since the last Authority Meeting. The Chair praised the recent Independent Custody Visiting Annual Conference, noting it covered trauma, its impact on individuals in police custody and what volunteers and custody staff do to make their contact more person centred, and trauma informed. Although focused on the role and impact of volunteers, the conference was well attended by Police Scotland custody staff which was valuable to discussions. She thanked the ICVS team for organising and Police Scotland for their involvement and engagement. The Chair also spoke of the Forensic Services Annual Excellence Awards, noting that the breadth and depth of the nominations showed there was much to celebrate. She thanked Fiona Douglas for arranging the awards.

No questions were raised.

Members noted the report.

4. COMMITTEE CHAIRS' REPORTS

Members considered the report which provided an update on business progressed through Committees and Oversight Groups since the last Authority Meeting. Committee and Oversight Group Chairs highlighted the main points raised at their meetings:

- People Committee: more evidence was sought on the impact in relation to well-being, inclusion and health and safety work. More detail was asked for in relation to the workforce strategic dashboard, and the Committee are looking for alignment between the People Strategy and the 2030 vision.
- Policing Together Oversight Group: learning from diversity training and the establishment of the independent police and advisory council was discussed. Sex equality and tackling misogyny was also discussed and the Committee were satisfied that the issues raised have been mapped across the Policing Together Portfolio action plan.
- Complaints and Conduct Committee: increase in frontline resolution for complaints was welcomed. Assurances were received that measures put in place to address the complaints handling backlog are starting to show an impact.

- Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee: Annual Report and Accounts discussed and recommended to the Authority for approval.
- Policing Performance Committee: The Committee noted it was the first use of the new performance and accountability framework and welcomed its ability to provide a clearer picture of strategic delivery however, one area requiring work is disaggregated data. The Committee heard Live Facial Recognition is actively under consideration and Members are looking for clarity on budget, planning and the rights-based pathway approach.

Members noted the report.

5. CHIEF CONSTABLE'S REPORT

Members considered the report which provided detail relating to the Police Service, policing, and the state of crime. Chief Constable Jo Farrell (CCFarrell) highlighted a number of key points as detailed in the paper. In addition to the written report, she highlighted the Policing Together portfolio's role in responding to sexism, misogyny, racism and discrimination issues. CCFarrell explained how the portfolio considers all the reviews and evidence along with the joint strategy and vision for policing plus legally required equality outcomes to develop and deliver meaningful action - all coordinated through an implementation plan. CCFarrell reiterated her commitment to this area, thanked ACC Catriona Paton (ACCPaton) and the Policing Together Oversight Group Chair, and encouraged staff to continue engaging with staff surveys.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Further comment was sought on Police Scotland's role in tackling drug deaths. DCC Alan Speirs (DCCSpeirs) explained that substance harm prevention is a part of the policing together portfolio and focuses on partnership and collaboration, especially partnership with Public Health Scotland. The Police Scotland Drug Strategy focuses on information sharing, minimising impact on local communities, maximising opportunities to reassure communities, improving referral pathways and improving understanding of lived experience. DCCSpeirs advised that improving technology to help share information and data quicker across partner networks and local communities is key. He also advised that naloxone use has had a big impact and confirmed that every operational officer carries it. DCC Jane Connors (DCCConnors) explained some of the enforcement elements, notably operational work to disrupt supply such as removal of pill pressers, disruption of nitazenes labs and county lines. DCCConnors explained that officers work closely with local authorities, social workers and housing officers to do joint proactive visits to help deny drug access and protect vulnerable people who are exploited as a result of drugs.

- Members asked CCFarrell to reiterate her position on live facial recognition. CCFarrell advised that a series of conversations and consultations around the use of the technology have taken place where privacy concerns have been raised. CCFarrell stated that using the rights-based pathway would allow a continual check and balance when considering what the deployment would look like, understanding the public safety benefits and understanding how the information will be used. She confirmed Police Scotland will endeavour to use lessons learned from other UK forces to help with this work. CCFarrell advised that work continues to develop a business case in a sensitive and appropriate manner that upholds values and ensures ongoing confidence and trust from communities. Ongoing oversight by the Authority will be provided by the Policing and Performance Committee.
- Members sought comment on the impacts of investment in enhanced community policing. CCFarrell explained that trust and confidence in policing stems from people's sense of safety and security, and community policing is key to this. Therefore, the ability to deliver the policing vision will include a strong visible community footprint including visible partnership effort. CCFarrell added that community policing is the foundation of the public seeing policing effectiveness, and it enables the organisation to identify tensions early and effects of national events. In terms of workforce modernisation, CCFarrell stated that the intention is to have police officers doing more frontline policing roles and there is evidence of increased numbers returning to the frontline. In addition, a police staff workforce will be developed that has expertise in dealing with some of the new threats driven by technology.
- Members sought further detail on the implementation of the estates masterplan. DCCSpeirs confirmed a Chief Officer for Estates had been recruited and it was the intention to bring an implementation plan and roadmap to a future Resources Committee. DCCSpeirs also confirmed Police Scotland were on track to deliver this year's capital spend with large capital projects ongoing and commitment to several refurbishments. He added that the next Resources Committee will receive information on Fettas and Jackton estates work. CCFarrell added that investment in the estate is key to staff and officers knowing that the organisation cares about their working environment and also for the public to see that Police Scotland are investing in their local area.
- Members sought comment on training undertaken to help police protests and counter protests. Detail was also sought specifically on the policing response to a protest held on 4th September 2025 at the Scottish Parliament. DCCConnors responded that Police Scotland have a duty to police protests but not to obstruct. She summarised the training undertaken, including human rights

training during probationer training, and escalation and communication training during officer safety training and public order refresher training. Behavioral science is also touched on during the 'act, don't react' training and public order officers get specific training on freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. DCCConnors confirmed that training is scenario-based and includes recent legislation. When planning for events, briefing notes are provided which include legal background and the style and tone to be set. Whilst understanding that protests can be emotive, human rights, de-escalation and communication is key to each response. Regarding the protest on 4th September, DCCConnors provided reassurance that Police Scotland are reviewing the circumstances and will ensure any complaints are considered and any learning will come through training mechanisms.

- Further comment was sought in relation to the public health approach to suicide prevention. DCCSpeirs responded that Police Scotland commissioned production of the film 'The Low Road' and wanted to showcase more widely. He explained that it was a complex area, but Police Scotland were connected and engaged at a UK level. He added that the partnership workstream in the area sits within the policing together portfolio and there was a range of activities available for staff and officers, as well as communities. DCCSpeirs confirmed Police Scotland work closely with the National Police Chief Council on policy for bereavement following suicide deaths and are working with partners to understand the impact.
- Following high profile cyber-attacks on retail and industrial organisations, assurances were sought on Police Scotland's preparedness to react to cyber threats. CCFarrell responded that Abertay University were a key strategic partner in terms of cyber and fraud work and they, along with other partners, assist the newly built fraud and cyber unit. CCFarrell explained that the force record and investigate 50 fraud crimes a day, mostly affecting young people and over 65s. Due to sensitivity, CCFarrell offered to provide further advice in private on Police Scotland's preparedness for cyber and fraud threats, and work on safeguarding Scotland. CCFarrell confirmed that Police Scotland will help to investigate any cyber-attacks on other organisations. DCCConnors added that it was important to be in the prevention and education space and sharing information and intelligence has led to increased reporting although there was still underreporting from the public.
- Members were assured that policing responses from Operation Begonia were undertaken throughout Scotland, with a focus on identifying victims and perpetrators.

Members noted the report and agreed the following action:

20250925-BM-001: Following high profile cyber-attacks on retail and industrial organisations – Police Scotland to provide further advice on preparedness for cyber and fraud threats, and work on safeguarding Scotland.

6. SPA CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Members considered the report which detailed activities involving SPA corporate staff since the previous Authority Meeting. In relation to the Annual Report and Accounts, Lynn Brown (LBrown) confirmed that assurances around pension schemes from third parties had been received and had been resolved to the satisfaction of the auditor.

Comment was sought on the Best Value Review. LBrown advised that a joint qualitative review by HMICS and Audit Scotland was being prepared, but from the initial findings she expected the Authority would be assured by the comments, findings and areas for improvement.

Members noted the report

7. POLICING TOGETHER PROGRESS REPORT

Members considered the report which provided an update on Police Scotland's Policing Together progress and evidences the mainstreaming approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion. ACCPaton provided a detailed summary of the key points detailed in the paper.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Policing Together Oversight Group (PTOG) Chair Tom Halpin commented that the Authority have seen the realignment of a whole policing division for policing together, demonstrating a structural shift with a dedicated Chief Officer. He confirmed the Oversight Group felt there was progress, and they were starting to see data on difficult issues. He had confidence that Police Scotland have ownership of the issue. As the PTOG Chair, he confirmed he had a high degree of confidence in the policing together portfolio.
- Members sought further comment on progress made in response to results from the Your Voice Matters survey and community engagement. ACCPaton responded that seeking to understand experiences helped determine the institutional issues which then helped determine how policies and procedures could be improved. The result of that work is the four pillars: leadership, training, communication and prevention and there is a programme of activity to respond to each which is reported through the PTOG. ACCPaton advised that the 'Act, don't react' programme helps provide staff with the ability and confidence to call out unacceptable behaviour. Members were told that user satisfaction results indicate that people

identifying as LGBTQI+ have a less positive experience of policing therefore the policing together team are working with the engagement and insights team to identify a better way of engaging with that group. A workshop was held where recommendations could be shared, which was a new way of engaging with communities who are seldom heard. DCCConnors added that survey feedback is reviewed monthly to identify areas of interest.

- Members questioned how the service is using established networks to gain insight and if there have been specific changes introduced as a direct result of those initiatives. ACCPaton responded that partnerships and engagements with networks is key, and any changes that come out of these networks are taken forward in a formal way with impact assessments. Members heard that understanding lived experience through established networks has helped develop the corporate parenting plan, and community engagement tools help monitor community tension.
- ACCPaton assured Members that Police Scotland are on track to achieve milestones as a solid foundation has been built supported by investment.
- Comment was sought on ensuring there was impartiality in policing. ACCPaton explained that impartiality in policing was not a new concept but has come to the forefront more as views become of more polarised. She explained that polarising views requires connecting and listening to understand perspectives and then using that to demonstrate if policing has to take a position.

Members noted the report.

8. ANNUAL CLIMIATE CHANGE ACTIVITY REPORT

Members considered the report which provided an update on the annual Climate Change Duties Report to Scottish Government for the year ending 31st March 2025, and the Declaration of the Climate Change Duties reports for submission to Scottish Government. Jen Cassells (JCassells) highlighted a number of key points as detailed in the paper.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Members were assured the Police Scotland were on target to meet Scottish Government timescales on emissions but would not meet their own environmental strategy target of 35%. JCassells explained that the estates masterplan had been developed with input from the sustainability team and Police Scotland will work with Scottish Government to maximise any additional funding schemes. The Police Scotland sustainability team has been given funding for their own studies on areas like gas consumption and LED roll out.

- Members noted that estate disposals do not necessarily reduce the carbon footprint for Scotland and sought further comment. JCassells agreed the carbon footprint issue would be transferred but disposing buildings that are too big or not sufficient creates an efficiency element. She advised that in several cases, disposed buildings are demolished as they are not fit for purpose for the new owner, but it was recognized Police Scotland only get the carbon bonus once with disposed buildings. JCassells explained that this was one reason the Environmental and Sustainability Plan is refreshed routinely.
- Members sought comment on preparedness for short- and long-term climate change. JCassells responded from an organisational viewpoint, advising there was an Adaption Strategy to help assess buildings for climate change impacts, and to help ensure refurbished buildings are future proof. DCCConnors provided comment from an operational viewpoint, advising that Police Scotland recently hosted a multi-agency response meeting for dealing with extreme weather, with a focus on strategic management of these incidents. Regular multi-agency exercises, workshops and briefings help with officer training and learning. Members also heard that Business Continuity plans are reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose.
- Members sought comment on transformation links with and heard there was pressure within Scottish Government resources on supporting resilience, but the Scottish Resilience Partnership is looking at capability and capacity.
- Members heard that partnership working will be a part of the new Sustainability Strategy. Gas, electricity, and fossil fuels, as the main emissions, will be a focus within the estates plan and future fleet work. Police Scotland will also look to work with Local Authorities to learn from their heating schemes. JCassells advised that output from the Sustainability Steering Group will allow the organisation to share and gain knowledge, all of which will be fed into the strategy.

Members noted the report.

The Chair and Chief Constable both paid tribute to retiring Chief Executive Lynn Brown, praising her financial management and oversight and support of policing in Scotland. Lynn Brown thanked Members, the Police Scotland Executive team, SPA corporate staff, the Director of Forensic Services and key stakeholders for their support and stressed the importance of having open and transparent governance.

The remaining items were taken in private.