

NOTE: Update will be reflected in the papers to the next public session of the Scottish Police Authority on 30 June 2020.

SPA Board Update – COVID 19 – 4th June 2020, 10 am (by video conference)

Attendees: Members

David Crichton (DC)
Matt Smith (MS)
Elaine Wilkinson (EW)
Jane Ryder (JR)
Tom Halpin (TH)
Mary Pitcaithly (MP)
Grant Macrae (GM)
Caroline Stuart (CS)
Martyn Evans (ME)
Michelle Miller (MM)
Bob Hayes (BH)

Attendees: Officers

Tom Nelson (TN)
Barry Sillers (BS)
John McCroskie (JM)
Catherine McIntyre (CM)
Lynne Clark (LC)
Vanessa Ewing (VE)
DCC Will Kerr (DCC WK)

Apologies:

Lynn Brown (LB)

Introduction

DC welcomed Members to the meeting and invited DCC WK to provide Members with an update.

Update from DCC Will Kerr / Police Scotland Weekly Summary Report

DCC WK gave an overview on the Police Scotland experience of the first weekend of phase 1 easing of lockdown restrictions saying there had been a major upsurge in calls for attendance and duty officers saying it felt more like a normal weekend. The majority of the public, however, observed the restrictions for meeting in public space.

PS are engaging with local authorities and working through policy and practice as they move through the phases but DCC WK was clear that the PS relationship with public will not change.

As the changing balance between Regulations and accompanying Guidance develops, this will not change the underlying principles that Police Scotland applied to both – i.e. proportionality, common sense, a bit of tolerance where appropriate using the 4 E's approach, all with the intent of maintaining the consent and co-operation of the public. Public confidence continues to be monitored and remains high.

DCC WK highlighted the possibility of protest activity in the coming days and referred to the Chief Constable's statement issued on the 2nd of June which referenced the recent events in the United States. In this statement the Chief constable also encouraged people in Scotland to continue to follow the current Scottish Government regulations.

PS will continue to plan for the possibility of such demonstrations expecting the majority to be peaceful.

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Members appreciated the principles which PS have set for their approach to policing as Scotland moves through the phases of easing out of lockdown and noted the consistent overarching principle of policing by consent.

The Members discussed with DCC Kerr the other challenges on demand that continue on the horizon for PS such as Brexit and COP26 and the impacts on cost and resourcing that all this will have in addition to COVID 19. These are all key issues to be considered by the Authority on an ongoing basis.

The Members articulated their ongoing offer of support to PS where required or helpful throughout this challenging time.

Director of Forensic Services Update

TN provided an update to Members on PPE within forensic Science noting the good stock levels of equipment at present.

On staffing levels, TN said that many staff are now returning to work and although there are a few COVID related absences none are currently testing positive.

Forensics Services have been working together with PS, the SPF and Unison, arranging independent Health & Safety visits to all Forensic Services sites. Further work is also being undertaken with scene examination for reassurance and independent view.

On phase 2 preparation work is ongoing with COPFS and PS looking at capacity over the next couple of months.

Information on risk assessments and a report on the site visits will be posted onto the Forensic Services intranet.

The Members asked that their appreciation of all the work being done be passed onto Forensic Services staff.

Finance Update

A finance bulletin was provided to Members ahead of the meeting and the Members appreciated the level of detail and clarity of the report. EW gave a follow up to other Members indicating that the spending review discussions for 20/21 were now starting within the Resources Committee and it was noted that a verbal update on this work would be given at the Board meeting in June.

The Members discussed the reporting of benefits, in particular the areas of efficiency and productivity and how savings in this area can ease the issues of demand in other areas.

ACTION: DC asked for a further discussion with EW on the messaging around demand and benefit reporting to ensure a collective understanding across policing and beyond.

Other Business

The Members noted the latest recorded crime statistics and ME indicated to Members that further discussions were taking place on these figures in the Policing Performance committee. Of particular note is the rise in fraud recording which also reflects reporting out with Scotland. This was agreed as important for Members when policing is looking at changing demands and new ways of working and would be one of the key strategic issues for policing going forward

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The Members further discussed the SPF referral to HSE. As yet no further response has been received from HSE. The Members were briefed on the HSE complaint handling process and the next steps being taken. Members noted a recommendation that advice should be issued on how matters of health & safety should and can be raised. EW asked that she be notified of any update on this prior to the Resources Committee in June.

ACTION: SPA Head of HR Governance to notify the Chair of the Resources Committee on any developments on the HSE referral ahead of the next Resources Committee in June.

ME reminded Members that as part of the work of the Independent Advisory Group (IAG), HMICS were surveying officers and the results of this would potentially help the Authority understand if there were any concerns being raised by officers.

ME gave the Members a brief update on the work of the IAG also noting that the portal had now been launched as another avenue for the public voice and that a full report will be made to the Board by John Scott QC in June.

Closing Remarks

DC directed the Members to the recent written submission from HMICS to the Justice committee ahead of the evidence session on 9th June noting HMICS's positive view on the approach being taken by both PS and SPA during the COVID 19 outbreak.

DC thanked everyone for their time and closed the meeting.

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