



Agenda Item 3.1

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Forensic Services Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>7th May 2024</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Via MS Teams</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>Forensic Services Director's report</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>Fiona Douglas, Director of Forensic Services</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For discussion</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	<b>No</b>

**PURPOSE**

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

## 1. Updates

### **Budget**

- 1.1. The approved budget of £44 million for revenue and £1 million for capital for 2024/25 allows Forensic Services to consolidate our investment in our New Operating Model – which is predominately an investment in our people. This budget for the coming year now gives us the stability to continue to support this investment throughout the year.
- 1.2. As during the past financial year, we will only move ahead with changes when it is prudent and financially sustainable to do so. This approach is reflected in the finance report for Period 11 (Performance Report 3.4) which predicts a £0.8 million revenue underspend for the current year.

### **2024-26 Business Plan**

- 1.3. The updated Forensic Services Business Plan covers the two years 2024-26 and sets out our priorities and progress towards the delivery of our long-term strategic objectives as detailed in the [Forensic Strategy 2021](#) and approved by the SPA on 29 September 2021.
- 1.4. The Business Plan highlights the current risks we are mitigating and tracks progress using a balance scorecard approach, measuring the impacts on our people, resources, processes, and partners.

### **New members of the Senior Management Team**

- 1.5. Paul Stewart, who brings extensive experience as a strategic leader at the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, joined Forensic Services as Head of Function last month. Sam Curran, who members will know from his current post in SPA Corporate, will also join next month as Head of Function filling the second vacancy in the Senior Management Team.
- 1.6. Derek Scrimger, after a distinguished career of almost 40 years, almost entirely spent in Forensic Services and legacy bodies, retires next month as Head of Function. Derek spent most of career as an Operational Scientist and worked on many high-profile cases in a lifetime devoted to public service.

## Quarter 4 Performance

- 1.7. With the initial phases of the new operating model in place as of 1 April 2024, Forensic Services continue with a risk-based approach to managing performance as we move ahead embedding this change. The balanced scorecard shows delivery is strong for Quarter 4, with continued focus on Criminal Toxicology capacity and demand, revision of our strategic workforce plan, demand forecasting, and the development of the Values and Behaviours Framework.
- 1.8. We continue to work with colleagues in SPA Corporate to improve and refine the performance reporting to the Forensic Services Committee, so it aligns and is consistent with reporting across all of the SPA committees.

## UKAS update

- 1.9 We received positive feedback from UKAS after their visit to the Toxicology team in Howden Hall in April, where they recognised the progress and improvements made since their previous visit last year. UKAS have also confirmed that they had seen positive progress of Management System audit activity and have now agreed Forensic Services can submit Extension to Scope applications.
- 1.10 After discussions with UKAS regarding [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/unaccredited, a plan for compliance was shared with them. A collaborative short life working group with Police Scotland and COPFS is being set up with an indicative timeline of September 2024 for completion of this work ahead of the UKAS next surveillance inspection in November 2024.

## Drug-driving update

- 1.11 The latest version of the Toxicology Improvement Plan encompasses a range of work to develop further technical processes and to validate and utilise new instrumentation which is focused on building increased capacity within the laboratory and streamlining the analysis of Section 4 cases. A plan of training and development for staff is also under way which ensures that new staff joining the team are trained appropriately and swiftly as well as developing existing staff skills particularly to increase the capacity available to

complete the complex reporting part of the process which has been a bottleneck.

- 1.12 Significant progress has been made in the delivery of the first version of the plan, which required toxicology staff to focus on planned improvements alongside providing some internal capacity for casework. To meet agreed levels of service the gap between demand and internal capacity was managed by outsourcing some cases to an external, private forensic services provider in England. These plans are underpinned by an expected level of demand that is set out in the agreed MOU with Police Scotland and COPFS.

### **New roof at Howden Hall**

- 1.13 The work to replace the roof on the Howden Hall laboratory has now been completed. Police Scotland's Estates project managed the work – which was carried out in stages, so the laboratory could remain open for business throughout the work.
- 1.14 This project benefits all staff working in Howden Hall as well as the service delivery and the lab roof is now compliant with modern building regulations. It will provide greater energy efficiency for the lab which had suffered from regular and long-standing disruptions which were costly to repair.

### **Scenes Tasking Unit**

- 1.15 The National Tasking Unit, who are responsible for the triaging and subsequent deployment of Scene Requests, have now been delivering this work for one year. Alongside the introduction of the new ways of working in Search & Recovery Scenes, these have together improved the use of Scene Examination resources.
- 1.16 Police Scotland Portfolio Assurance colleagues have undertaken an independent post implementation review which is undergoing a final review before being submitted to Forensic Services. The resultant actions in response to this review will be taken forward as part of the response to the recommendations of the external review of our tasking and deployment processes which has been carried out by colleagues from the Metropolitan Police Service.

### **Demonstrating the value of Forensic Services**

- 1.17 The Director of Forensic Services has taken on the chair of the short life working group on Demonstrating Value of Forensic Services following the retirement of SPA board member Jane Ryder. Thanks

to the financial support from The Leverhulme Research Centre for Forensic Science, a researcher will be taking this work forward and the recruitment process for this post is currently nearing completion.

### **Operation Launchpad**

- 1.18 A large number of staff from across Forensic Services supported Operation Launchpad with teams from Search and Recovery Scenes, Biology, Chemistry and Documents, the Mark Enhancement Laboratory, and Fingerprints all involved.
- 1.19 Ian MacLeod, 66, and Dean McLeod, 42, who murdered and mutilated two men with a blowtorch were both jailed for at least 34 years. Judge Lord Arthurson described this “one of the worst cases of murder to come before the High Court”.

### **Forensic Nurses training**

- 1.20 Carol Rogers, Forensic Operations Lead, and Joanne Cochrane, Senior Forensic Scientist, from Forensic Services delivered training last month at the Scottish Police College to nursing students from the Queen Margaret University PG Cert Advanced Forensic Practise, Sexual Offence Examination course.
- 1.21 The course, created on the back of the Forensic Nurse Pilot, initiated by the Chief Medical Officer Taskforce, is part of a year-long programme to provide the nurses with the training and evidence gathering required to allow them to carry out forensic medical examinations (FME) of victims of rape and sexual assault. Currently, only doctors can legally carry out FME in Scotland.

## **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.