



Authority Meeting

27 September 2024

Minutes of the Authority Meeting held on Thursday 22 August 2024 at Merchants House, Glasgow

Board Members present:	Martyn Evans (Chair) Fiona McQueen (Vice Chair) Chris Creegan Paul Edie Tom Halpin Alasdair Hay Pauline Howie Katharina Kasper Angela Leitch Grant Macrae Catriona Stewart Caroline Stuart
Board Member apologies:	Mary Pitcaithly
In attendance:	Scottish Police Authority (SPA) Lynn Brown, Chief Executive Karen Vallance, Governance Support Officer Police Scotland Chief Constable Jo Farrell Deputy Chief Constable Bex Smith Deputy Chief Constable Jane Connors James Gray, Chief Financial Officer Tom McMahon, Director of Strategy and Analysis Nicky Page, Head of Human Resources

	Forensic Services Fiona Douglas, Director
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1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

1.1 CHAIR’S OPERNING REMARKS

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all Authority Members and representatives from Police Scotland’s senior leadership team. The Chair also welcomed Tina Yule from HMICS who was observing the meeting and wished her the best in her upcoming retirement.

1.2 APOLOGIES

Members noted apologies from Mary Pitcaithly.

1.3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND CONNECTIONS

Declarations of interest were raised by three Members during the meeting:

- Chris Creegan advised he had been the Vice Chair of the Independent Review Group referenced within the Policing Together Oversight Group Chair’s Report (Item 4).
- Regarding a potential question she had on Forensic Services recruitment (Item 7), Fiona McQueen advised she was Chair of Ayrshire College.
- Tom Halpin advised he was a member of the Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group referenced with the SPA Chief Executive’s Report (Item 6).

1.4 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members raised no other business.

1.5 DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE (ITEM 9)

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

2. MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 MINUTE FROM MEETING HELF ON 27 JUNE 2024 FOR APPROVAL

The Authority approved the minute of the 27 June 2024.

2.2 DECISIONS SINCE LAST MEETING

The Chair confirmed no decisions were taken via correspondence since the last Authority Meeting.

3. SPA CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair took his report as read and invited any questions.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Comment was sought on the Chair's impression of the mental health distress service in North Lanarkshire. The Chair thanked the officers involved in leading the programme and advised he was impressed by the community triage system which had seen a fall in the number of people in distress having to attend A&E. The Chair added that the opportunity costs saved was thousands of officer hours, but the key next step was understanding what can be learned and how that can be shared. Chief Constable Jo Farrell (CCFarrell) agreed learning was key to scale up good practice and that the mental health taskforce is developing an index which consolidates up to date contact details for mental health support. CCFarrell advised that it was estimated officer attendance at mental health distress calls had reduced by 80% and Police Scotland will continue to develop and progress the approach with partners. She thanked the leadership shown by all partners. The Vice Chair also praised the service, noting that putting the person at the centre of decision making meant everyone benefitted.
- Comment was sought on the opportunities and learning of DESC. The Chair responded that the clear benefit was an improved criminal justice system, by increasing early pleas, dealing with disputed claims, and allowing evidence to be held and shared digitally around the system. CCFarrell commented she was confident the system had piloted it well and it will continue to be rolled out. Officers have welcomed the change, and it was a good example of public sector reform. DCC Jane Connors (DCCConnors) shared some anecdotal evidence of some positive outcomes and advised that faster resolution is decreasing time in courts and its associated spend. DCCConnors also advised of the link between body worn video (BWV) and DESC and ensured Members that work is progressing to upgrade the network. DCCConnors confirmed DESC and BWV teams work together as do the suppliers and it was expected that devices will be deployed and active in spring 2025.

In closing the item, the Chair advised that he had not accepted a contract extension from Scottish Government and would therefore be leaving post in January 2025 at the end of his term. He thanked the Cabinet Secretary for the offer and positive dialogue. The Chair advised a recruitment process would be launched in September 2024 with a new Chair announced in the new year. The Vice Chair, on behalf of the Authority, thanked the Chair for his counsel and vision. CCFarrell also shared thanks for his work and leadership.

Members noted the report.

4. COMMITTEE CHAIRS' REPORT

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 Chair summarised their reports which covered:

- Police Negotiating Board for Scotland
- Revised Model of Policing Oversight Group
- Legal Committee
- Forensic Services Committee
- Policing Together Oversight Group
- Resources Committee
- Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee

In addition to the written reports provided, the following matters were raised:

- The Chair confirmed a Revised Model of Policing Oversight Group meeting took place on 21 August and a written report would be provided to the next Authority meeting. DCCConnors confirmed that the 3-year business plan discussed at the meeting would also be presented to the next Authority meeting.
- The Policing Together Oversight Group Chair confirmed the final report from the Independent Review Group had been published on Police Scotland's website. CCFarrell thanked the group for their work and confirmed their report would be used to inform their work in the area of Policing Together.

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. CCFarrell provided an overview of the points noted within the executive summary of her report.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Members sought comment on the strategic approach to tackling drug use. CCFarrell responded that the Scottish Crime Campus (SCC) was a strategic resource deployed across the country with links beyond Scotland's boundaries to react to intelligence. Key to that national partnership work is intelligence generated at community policing level. CCFarrell confirmed a robust approach is taken on those who are dealing drugs but there are opportunities to identify those using them and to put them in touch with other organisations who can support. DCC Bex Smith (DCCSmith) also referenced the work of the Scottish Government Serious and Organised Crime Taskforce and ongoing work with partners to establish priorities for tackling drugs.

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- Members heard the SCC is unique in bringing together key law enforcement and partners to allow easy exchange of information and intelligence by pooling expertise and resource together. CCFarrell confirmed the future ambition is to move from a partnership approach to a fully integrated approach.
- Members questioned how Police Scotland are encouraging adoption of the Cyber Alarms digital tool. CCFarrell explained the cyber alarms tool allowed businesses to use technology for early identification of potential cyber-attacks. Members heard Police Scotland had a range of partners who educate businesses on the technology and highlight the benefits.
- Members sought more comment on partnership work to improve road safety. DCCConnors provided some examples of awareness initiatives provided with partners, including: the older drivers programme, rider refinement programme and changes to fixed penalty notice charges.
- Members sought assurance that Police Scotland have resources in place to deal with any threat from far-right extremism. CCFarrell explained that following the murders in Southport, Police Scotland mobilised a visible police response in anticipation of any disorder. CCFarrell assured Members that the service continually monitors far-right activity, collates intelligence and assures communities. In recent weeks, Police Scotland has been pro-active in calling out misinformation on social media.
- Members were assured that policies will be reviewed in response to the United Nations Convention on Human Rights for Children, and any change in policy will include looking at impacts on protected characteristics.
- Members were informed that officer numbers will be at the optimum level of between 16500 and 16600 by the end of 2024 or start of 2025. An exact date is hard to determine due to fluctuations in retirements and resignations. Monthly number will be reported to the Scottish Government. CCFarrell added that recruitment campaigns are taking place across the country and more probationers will be recruited this year than any other.
- Members sought comment on the use of facial recognition in prevention and early detection of perpetrators. DCCSmith confirmed Police Scotland are supportive of facial recognition but believe it has to be carefully considered in terms of consultation and ethics. Members heard Police Scotland have met with the Chief Scientific Advisor to understand what technology is being implemented across other UK forces and the next step is to learn from their implementation.

Members noted the report

6. SPA CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Members considered the report which detailed activities involving SPA corporate staff since the previous Authority Meeting. Lynn Brown (LBrown) highlighted a number of key points as detailed in the paper.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Regarding anti-social behaviour, LBrown committed to seek further information on whether the Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group are considering the recent public disorder which has taken place across other parts of the UK. Tom Halpin confirmed SPA and Police Scotland had provided information to the group, and the group will report direct to Ministers in 2025. He confirmed that a significant focus of the group is data relating to reporting. DCCConnors confirmed policing anti-social behaviour is routinely included in local policing plans and discussed within internal groups.

In concluding the item, LBrown advised of her intention to retire in Autumn 2025, following six years in post in a permanent and interim position. LBrown confirmed she would help the new Chair settle in and help recruit a new Chief Executive Officer. The Chair thanked LBrown for her work and for her willingness to remain in post to help the new Chair.

Members noted the report and agreed the following action:

20240822-BM-001: to seek further info on whether they are considering recent public disorder across other parts of the UK.

7. FORENSIC SERVICES DIRECTORS REPORT

Members considered the report which provided an update on the recent key activities across Forensic Services. Fiona Douglas (FDouglas) highlighted a number of key points as detailed in the paper and the appendices relating to nitazenes in Scotland and working for Forensic Services.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Members questioned if there were any pressure areas identified and any short-term responses. FDouglas responded that partners have to be better at sharing data and cited the NHS and prisons as examples of organisations who have large amounts of data. Members heard the Leverhulme Research Centre for Forensic Centre are due to be leading a discussion on how address barriers for sharing data. DCCSmith agreed more is required in sharing data and preventative work to support those affected by drugs.

- Members sought assurance that the new upcoming six-month statutory testing time limit for drug driving could be adhered to. FDouglas confirmed she had high confidence in Section 5a cases as these are already working to the reduced statutory testing time limit. FDouglas reported that Forensic Services and Police Scotland continue to work together on sample transfers and are making good progress, and that the MOU will be refreshed to tighten timescales.

Members noted the report.

8. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE QUARTERLY REPORT

Members considered the report which provided an overview of the financial position of the SPA and Police Scotland for quarter one (Q1) of the financial year 2024-25. James Gray (JGray) highlighted a number of key points as detailed in the paper.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- The Resources Committee Chair confirmed the Committee had raised concern on capital spend and it would remain an area of focus.
- Members sought comment on how Police Scotland align workforce planning and financial planning. JGray responded that a group was set up to look at bringing budget into line last year and one of the measures taken was to pause probationer intakes. The workforce consequence of that is that there are less officers in this financial year so even more are required to be recruited during this financial year. CCFarrell added that strengthening the frontline required a reshaping of the workforce.
- LBrown advised that she had received a letter from Scottish Government regarding the current financial position. The letter referred to the financial challenges facing the Scottish Government and detailed the action expected to ensure that discretionary spend is tightened and that underspends are used for the wider financial position. LBrown committed to sharing the letter with all Members.

Members noted the report and agreed the following action:

20240822-BM-002: SPA Chief Executive to circulate letter received from Scottish Government regarding the current financial position to all Authority Members.

The remaining items were taken in private.