



## Authority Meeting

21 August 2025

Minutes of the Authority Meeting held on Thursday 26 June 2025 at COSLA, Edinburgh

Board Members present:	Fiona McQueen (Chair) Chris Creegan Paul Edie Tom Halpin Alasdair Hay Pauline Howie Katharina Kasper (Items 1-5, 8) Angela Leitch Mary Pitcaithly
Board Member apologies:	None
In attendance:	<p><b>Scottish Police Authority</b> Lynn Brown, Chief Executive Karen Vallance, Governance Support Officer</p> <p><b>Police Scotland</b> Chief Constable Jo Farrell Deputy Chief Constable Jane Connors Deputy Chief Constable Alan Speirs Deputy Chief Constable Bex Smith James Gray, Chief Financial Officer Katy Miller, Director of People and Development</p> <p><b>Forensic Services</b> Vicki Morton, Chief Operating Officer</p>

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## **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 apologies.

### **1.3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND CONNECTIONS**

No declarations of interest or connections were raised by Authority Members.

### **1.4 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Authority Members raised no other business.

### **1.5 DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE (ITEMS 9-11)**

Members agreed that, in accordance with paragraph 20 of the SPA Standing Orders, the Authority would consider items 9-11 in private for the reasons set out on the agenda.

## **2. MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

### **2.1 MINUTE FROM MEETING HELD ON 22 MAY 2025 FOR APPROVAL**

**Members approved the minute from the meeting held 22 May 2025.**

### **2.2 DECISIONS SINCE LAST MEETING**

Members noted no decisions via correspondence had been made since the last 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 highlighted a number of key points as detailed in the paper and congratulated Chris Brown on his appointment as the next SPA Chief Executive.

Tom Halpin commended the work of outgoing SIPR Director Liz Alston and confirmed he was involved in the selection panel for the new Chair and welcomed her successor, Dr Andrew Wooff.

**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 Chairs summarised their reports which covered:

- Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee
- Commonwealth Games Oversight Group
- Complaints and Conduct Committee
- People Committee
- Policing Performance Committee
- Resources Committee

**Members noted the report.**

#### **5. CHIEF CONSTABLE REPORTING**

Members considered two reports: the Chief Constable's Report which provided detail relating to the Police Service, policing, and the state of crime; and the Chief Constable's Annual Assessment of Policing in Scotland. Chief Constable Jo Farrell (CCFarrell) highlighted a number of key points as detailed in both papers.

In addition to the report, the following points were also raised by CCFarrell:

- Chris Brown was congratulated on his appointment as the new SPA Chief Executive.
- CCFarrell referenced progress on the national conversation on live facial recognition, noting Police Scotland co-hosted the Scottish Biometrics conference in June 2024, a live facial recognition event in May 2025 and have held five focus groups with various organisations. CCFarrell advised there were more steps to take to develop a live facial recognition capability, including further stakeholder and public engagement, developing a business case, policy and operating procedures, and identifying necessary financial support. This will ensure the use of the technology is governed in an appropriate, proportionate and necessary way.
- An update on searching relating to sex and gender was provided, with CCFarrell reiterating that Police Scotland's review of sex and gender continues to consider all views, legislation, guidance and legal advice. Based on specialist human rights legal advice and staff association and trade union engagement, interim guidance has been

developed and issued on searching in custody or as part of a stop and search. CCFarrell confirmed conduct searches in custody or as part of a stop and search interaction which involve the removal of more than an outer jacket, gloves, headgear or footwear, will be carried out on the basis of biological sex. These searches will only be carried out by officers or staff of the same biological sex with one exception: when an individual whose lived gender differs from their biological sex requests to be searched by an officer of their lived gender. In these circumstances, efforts will be made to ensure an appropriate officer conducts the search, if operationally viable, and written consent will be required from the authorising officer, the person to be searched and the officer(s) conducting the search. CCFarrell confirmed the interim guidance requires transgender officers and staff to search in line with their biological sex but it is recognised that transgender colleagues may wish to exempt themselves from these searches to avoid disclosing their gender identity, and the operational practice permits officers to be excused from searches for a variety of reasons. CCFarrell stated that the guidance objectives are to preserve people's dignity, ensure Police Scotland's officers and staff are acting lawfully and in line with the Equality Act and the Human Rights Act and to protect officers and staff from potential challenge.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Regarding the update within the report to policing our communities, Members sought further comment on governance arrangements, response policing implications and community impacts. DCC Jane Connors (DCCConnors) explained the governance arrangements, stating that the project has both a project and programme board and is also discussed at the Policing Management Board and the Transformation Board. It is anticipated the full business case will come to the Resources Committee. Members heard it will be launched in Forth Valley in September and from October will be launched in two divisions at a time. There are a number of interdependencies such as mental health, court attendance and force mobilisation, all which will help strengthen the service. DCC Bex Smith (DCCSmith) added it was important to understand the interdependencies to help with transition and transformation. DCCConnors explained that local investigation hubs will help improve victim support, improve investigation quality and ensure essential visibility. Members heard response times will be improved and capacity from other areas of policing will help resource the local policing teams. Members were assured on the impact on officers and staff, hearing evaluation will happen through officer feedback and workforce surveys.

- Members questioned what the impact of the Public Sector Reform Strategy will be on Police Scotland. CCFarrell stated that reform was not just about financial savings but creating new capabilities. DCC Alan Speirs (DCCSpeirs) added that the ability to be joined up with partners is embedded within the three-year plan and vision. Members also heard the Best Value Audit will highlight successes and some critical learning.
- Members sought further comment on sharing efficiencies with criminal justice partners. CCFarrell advised further work would be undertaken but one area progressed is the use of direct measures, such as recorded police warnings, to bring about quicker justice and summary case management. CCFarrell provided examples such as the reduction of cases sent to Crown Office and the increased capacity brought about from seeking voluntary attendance.
- Members sought assurance that a rights-based pathway is applied when selecting and operating new technology. CCFarrell responded that a rights-based pathway will be used during engagement and development of introducing live facial recognition technology. CCFarrell stated she understood there would be questions around AI bias and equity therefore the organisation will continually reinforce and evidence that technology is being deployed in an ethical and proportionate manner. DCCSmith assured Members that any new technology and use of AI would be person focused, and trauma informed.
- Members referred to the number of interdependencies against the estates masterplan and sought comment on how work is prioritised. DCCSmith responded that local community demand, workforce mix, and new technology need to be understood to help make decisions on estates as all are interlinked. Therefore, the estates masterplan is built into the transformation plan. CCFarrell advised that two priority areas are custody provision and front-line response estate in the west of Scotland.
- Alasdair Hay, Policing Performance Committee Chair, summarised the recent Committee discussion on the sex and gender review. Noting the recent publication of the interim guidance, he sought clarity on whether Police Scotland had completed an audit of estate for single sex spaces, what support and training had been offered for searching transgender members of public and by transgender officers, as well as expected timelines for completion of the Short Life Working Group (SLWG). CCFarrell advised that Police Scotland had had experience of rolling out new guidance, citing the Hate Crime legislation guidance as an example. She ensured Members all staff and officers could seek guidance either on the phone or online if required. Recognising there is considerable interest in the area, a detailed communication plan had been circulated about how officers

gain advice. DCCSpeirs added there was a deliberate decision to wait until the National Police Chief Council introduced their guidance so that Police Scotland could take learning. DCCSpeirs confirmed that an estates audit has been undertaken, and work is continuing to respond to the outcomes. Members heard the SLWG is still continuing but the organisation was in the final phases of concluding work on internal policies.

- With regards to searching, Members sought assurance that steps had been taken to adequately address the level of operational risk, and that engagement would continue at pace, with views taken from the widest possible range of stakeholders. CCFarrell responded all work is undertaken with fairness, dignity and respect at its heart and feedback and engagement with transgender officers and staff will be a continual process. DCCSpeirs added that the Policing Together portfolio had allowed Police Scotland to introduce opportunities for statutory and non-statutory staff associations to engage. Daily conversations regarding sex and gender are taking place with some. Members paid credit to Police Scotland for the work and effort undertaken in the area and the progress made.

**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.

No questions were raised.

**Members noted the report.**

## **7. FINANCIAL INDICATIVE REPORT**

Members considered the report which provided an update on the provisional 2024/25 financial outturn position of the SPA and Police Scotland. James Gray (JGray) highlighted a number of key points as detailed in the paper.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Resources Committee Chair, Pauline Howie, asked about the challenges with this budget and how these are being managed. JGray highlighted the planning challenges as a result of annual capital allocations means the organisation was always playing catch



up. He highlighted that the biggest revenue is pay which brought risk.

- LBrown noted that whilst unaudited, the figures were impressive and supports the view that the organisation is run well financially.

**Members noted the report.**

## **8. WORKFORCE ANNUAL REPORT**

Members considered the report which provided annual sight of relevant reports from the People Committee in relation to workforce data, wellbeing, health and safety and year one implementation plans for the People Strategy and Strategic Workforce Plans. Katy Miller (KMiller) highlighted a number of key points as detailed in the paper and advised that Police Scotland will move to thematic reports which will be more outcome focussed. The first will focus on health and safety, wellbeing, training, leadership and talent.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- The People and Development portfolio was credited with producing the detailed reports during a period of restructure.
- Members asked what was being done to mitigate against increased assaults. DCCSpeirs responded that Your Safety Matters focusses on assaults and injuries and the outcomes are reported to the People Board. Members heard Body Worn Video would likely have an effect on reducing assault numbers as it was helping to de-escalate situations.
- Members sought more comment on learning and development approaches. KMiller responded that during the last 18 months leadership development has focussed on the Your Leadership Matters platform. Work is progressing to offer officers and staff training so that they are ready for promotion as opposed to being trained once in a promoted role. DCCSmith added that Senior Leadership training has been refreshed.
- Members requested a progress update on workforce mix. DCCSmith responded that a proof of concept on recruiting civilian investigators had been positive so it is an area for development. Work continues to understand how to move officers back into front line work and how to track this.
- Members requested an update on the review of the MyCareer platform. KMiller stated that it was recognised MyCareer had moved from a performance appraisal approach to a promotion approach. A pilot to separate my career and promotions had been undertaken, and the evaluation was positive so it is likely a new appraisal approach will be taken forward. The executive function will discuss and agree the best approach and work will start thereafter.

- Members asked when the next iteration of the Strategic Workforce Plan could be expected and heard DCCSmith is leading on workforce development including workforce capabilities. DCCSmith explained the organisation needs to understand how to grow capability with the current officer numbers and to ensure capabilities are in the right place, whilst also trying to understand what the workforce will look like in 2030. A report will be brought to the Resources Committee by the year end.
- Members sought further information on modified duties. KMiller responded that a deep dive will come to the August People Committee. She explained the various reasons why officers would be on modified duties, such as recuperation, pre and post maternity and to protect officers who are under investigation. The biggest category is long term modified and whilst officers may be doing a good job within these roles, the organisation has to find a balance between legislative requirements, discriminative employment matters and ensuring front line numbers. A panel has been established to bring cases forward to accelerate decisions to help both the officer and the organisation.

**Members noted the report.**

**The remaining items were taken in private.**