

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>SPA Policing Performance Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>9 December 2021</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Video Conference</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>Call Handling and Response Times Update</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>John Hawkins, ACC Local Policing North and C3</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	<b>No</b>

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this paper is to provide the Policing Performance Committee with an update in relation to Call Handling and Response Times.

Members are invited to discuss the contents of this paper.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 A Modernised Contact and Engagement Strategy and 101 Call Handling update paper was presented to the SPA Policing Performance Committee on 1 September 2021.
- 1.2 As outlined in the paper, Police Scotland experienced challenges in respect of call handling during the unprecedented coronavirus public health emergency, which has been in line with other emergency and public services.
- 1.3 Causation factors included an extension of the THRIVE (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement) assessment to include COVID-19 specific questions; physical distancing requirements reducing capacity within Contact, Command and Control (C3) Division; increased absence due to COVID-19 coupled with self-isolation requirements; an increase in public contact with members of the public seeking additional information or reporting concerns about COVID-19 restrictions; and the impact from displaced demand from other public and emergency services.
- 1.4 Throughout these challenges, Police Scotland prioritised emergency responses and maintained responses to emergency (999) demand with no discernible drop in service. Police Scotland did not discontinue response to non-emergency demand during the coronavirus pandemic, however, the challenges outlined above impacted on 101 answer times and there was an increase in discontinued calls to 101. Mitigation measures were introduced, including the equipping of alternative sites to operate as service centres, and the development of alternative means of contact.
- 1.5 It is recognised that the challenges associated with COVID-19 continue, and are likely to continue and potentially increase over the winter months.

## **FURTHER DETAIL ON THE REPORT TOPIC**

- 2.1 As a result of the challenges faced by Police Scotland a number of work streams were progressed, in the short to medium term, to mitigate risks, under the strategic oversight of Assistant Chief Constable John Hawkins.

### **Financial Incentive**

- 2.2 On 1 November 2021 a temporary short term workforce agreement was implemented in C3 to increase staff uptake on overtime and further support ability to manage peaks in demand thus ensuring additional flexibility and resilience in our non-emergency 101 response. Overtime enables C3 to meet (sometimes unanticipated) peaks in demand. Uptake has come under pressure due to staff absence and Staff Pay and Rewards Modernisation having reduced/removed the level of financial incentive for staff.
- 2.3 A greater uptake of overtime, alongside other measures implemented will ensure additional flexibility and resilience in relation to non-emergency response during peak periods of demand.

### **ICT**

- 2.4 ICT have worked with C3 to implement a number of measures to aid improved call handling, as follows:
- 2.5 **101 Call Steering Menu Update**  
The options presented to a caller when they dial 101 have been updated to better direct callers to the most appropriate resource to assist with their contact. Calls relating to social media campaigns, missing persons, or previously logged incidents can now be routed directly to appropriately trained members of the Resolution Team removing the need for these calls to be triaged in the Police Scotland Service Centre (PSSC). This will reduce double handling of calls and reduce demand into the PSSC.
- 2.6 **Dynamic Expected Wait Time Messaging**  
Routing has been developed to allow messages to be played to a caller before their call enters the queue if the expected wait time for their call exceeds certain thresholds. The messages will change with 5 minute increments and offer advice to direct callers to the Police Scotland website. This will ensure callers are informed at the start of the call of any potential extended wait and encourage non-urgent callers to either utilise an alternative method of contact or call back at a quieter time.
- 2.7 **Auto Ring-Fencing to protect Emergency Calls**  
Updated programming has been implemented to enable the call system to automatically manage the number of service advisors ring-fenced to protect service for emergency calls. By removing manual ring-fencing the service advisor time currently lost while

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they wait for an emergency call has been utilised to assist with the handling of non-emergency demand.

### **Corporate Communications**

- 2.8 To assist with unnecessary demand being placed on C3, specifically in relation to 101, a public awareness campaign took place across various media platforms to highlight proper use of 101 and to encourage callers to consider other means of resolution if available.
- 2.9 Police Scotland's Corporate Communications have enhanced the Police Scotland website with additional information and direction. As a result a new page, 'read this before you call 101', has been added to the Police Scotland website.
- 2.10 Messaging on Police Scotland social media platforms has also highlighted information that can be obtained on the Police Scotland website and from other agencies.
- 2.11 Internal messaging has also been circulated requesting staff to cease using 101 as a switchboard service and advice to use the information available via the Police Scotland intranet page.
- 2.12 Recognising the challenges associated with COVID-19 continue coupled with the potential increased demand as a result of COP26, Police Scotland ensured the aforementioned work streams were in place before the start of COP26 to ensure Police Scotland was in the strongest position possible.

### **Call Handling Performance**

- 2.13 This following table (Table 1) presents call statistic and performance comparative data from quarter 2 (July – September) in 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22.

**Table 1**

<b>Call Handling</b>		<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>
		<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q2</b>
<b>Number of 999 / 101 calls</b>	<b>999 Calls</b>	169,775	175,405	194,258
	<b>101 Calls</b>	521,140	544,054	487,836
<b>Average Call Answer Time</b>	<b>999 Calls</b>	11 sec	10 sec	7 sec
	<b>101 Calls</b>	00:01:09	00:03:39	00:04:26
<b>Discontinued calls</b>	<b>999 Calls</b>	1%	0%	1%
	<b>101 Calls</b>	14%	35%	38%
<b>Max Delay in answering</b>	<b>999 Calls</b>	00:03:19	00:05:31	00:05:46
	<b>101 Calls</b>	00:29:39	01:28:53	01:08:30
<b>Number of 999/101 calls that do not result in an incident/crime</b>		241,178	321,452	297,052
<b>Percentage of 999/101 calls that do not result in an incident/crime</b>		34.9%	44.5%	43.6%

- 2.14 As shown within the data above, 101 call answering times have increased year on year. This is a similar picture as the Q1 figures presented in the paper to the SPA Policing Performance Committee on 1 September 2021.
- 2.15 There are a number of factors affecting this increase however, the increase in call handling time brought about by the introduction of the Contact Assessment Model (CAM) and the impact of COVID-19 are the main contributory factors. The introduction of the CAM forecast an increase in the duration of calls, resulting from the more in-depth initial THRIVE information gathering exercise to ensure the call was resolved in the most appropriate way. Due to the ongoing pandemic, there has been a Health and Safety requirement to gain additional information in relation to COVID-19 risks. It is essential that a call handler establishes if there are any persons at that location who are either COVID-19 positive, shielding, self-isolating,

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under quarantine restrictions or suffering from any symptoms. This allows the attending officers to wear the appropriate PPE.

2.16 It should be noted that the work streams mentioned previously in relation to financial incentive, ICT and Corporate Communications were not been implemented until October 2021 so had no impact on performance during Q2 2021.

2.17 This following table (Table 2) presents call statistic and performance comparative data for the month of October in 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22. This is indicative of the impact of the improvement work streams detailed above.

**Table 2**

<b>Call Handling</b>		<b>October 2019</b>	<b>October 2020</b>	<b>October 2021</b>
<b>Total Number of 999 calls</b>		53,515	52,866	58,451
<b>Total Number of 101 calls</b>		162,680	168,440	131,330
<b>Average call answer time</b>	<b>999 calls</b>	11 seconds	7 seconds	6 seconds
	<b>101 calls</b>	1 min 13 seconds	3 mins 15 seconds	1 min 53 seconds
<b>Discontinued calls</b>	<b>999 calls</b>	1%	0%	1%
	<b>101 calls</b>	14%	32%	19%
<b>Max delay in answering</b>	<b>999 calls</b>	00:02:58	00:04:14	00:03:42
	<b>101 calls</b>	00:16:06	00:36:39	01:19:42
<b>Number of 999/101 calls that do not result in an incident/crime</b>		76,514	93,697	61,118
<b>Percentage of 999/101 calls that do not result in an incident/crime</b>		35.4%	42.3%	32.2%

2.18 As shown within the data above the average call answer time for 101 calls in October 2021 is 1 minute 53 seconds, which is a

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reduction from 3 minutes 15 seconds in comparison to October 2020.

2.19 Although there has been no change to the in-depth initial THRIVE information gathering exercise or requirements to gain additional information in relation to COVID-19 risks, the ICT and Corporate Communications work streams had been implemented. It should also be noted that there was also a restriction on annual leave from 21 October 2021 as a result of COP26, resulting in increased staffing in the PSSC.

2.20 This following table (Table 3) presents call statistic and performance comparative data from 21 October to 14 November in 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22. This data has been included in the paper as relates to the time period where restrictions were implemented on staff utilising annual leave within the PSSC in support of COP26.

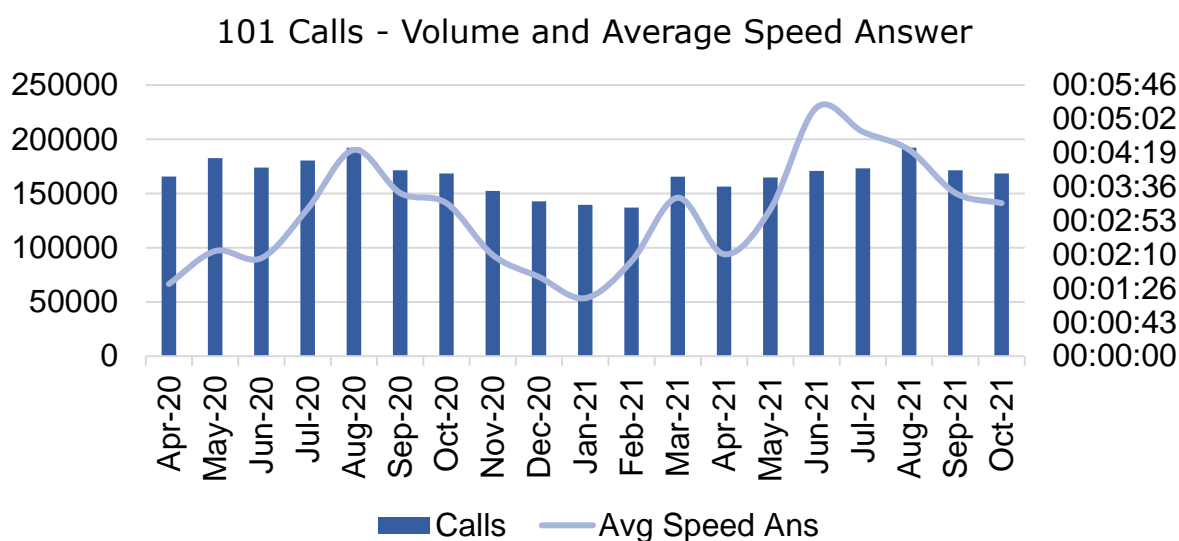
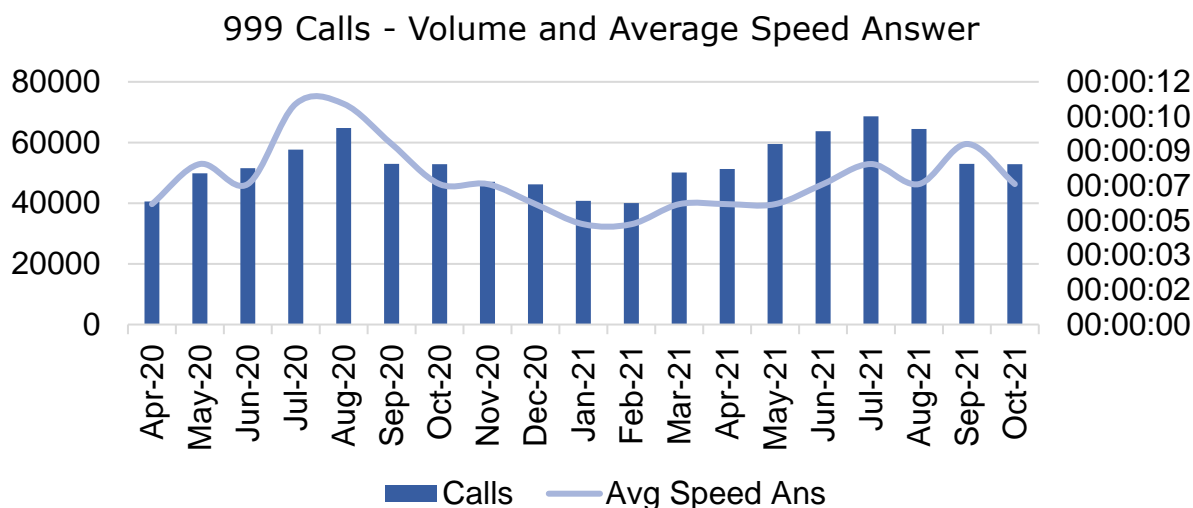
**Table 3**

<b>Call Handling</b>		<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Total Number of 999 calls</b>		44,638	41,150	44,727
<b>Total Number of 101 calls</b>		133,664	133,408	104,008
<b>Average call answer time</b>	<b>999 calls</b>	11 seconds	7 seconds	5 seconds
	<b>101 calls</b>	1 min 29 seconds	2 mins 34 seconds	31 seconds
<b>Discontinued calls</b>	<b>999 calls</b>	1%	0%	1%
	<b>101 calls</b>	16%	27%	6%
<b>Max delay in answering</b>	<b>999 calls</b>	00:02:58	00:04:48	00:02:23
	<b>101 calls</b>	00:15:49	00:36:13	00:31:46
<b>Number of 999/101 calls that do not result in an incident/crime</b>		67,906	64,162	38,339
<b>Percentage of 999/101 calls that do not result in an incident/crime</b>		38.08%	36.76%	25.78%

2.21 Generally there is a 15% reduction in staffing levels in the PSSC as a result of staff utilising annual leave. However, during 21 October and 14 November 2021 there was an embargo on annual leave due to COP26. As a result there was only a 1-2% reduction in staffing levels due to annual leave.

2.22 As shown within the data the average call answer time for 101 calls was 31 seconds and 6% discontinued 101 calls during this time period in 2021. This performance evidences the benefit of increased staffing numbers within the PSSC in order to provide stronger 101 performance. Staffing requirements for the PSSC are being considered as part of the Modernised Contact and Engagement Programme.

2.23 The following graphs compare the volume of calls received by the PSSC and the average speed of answer for both 999 and 101 calls.

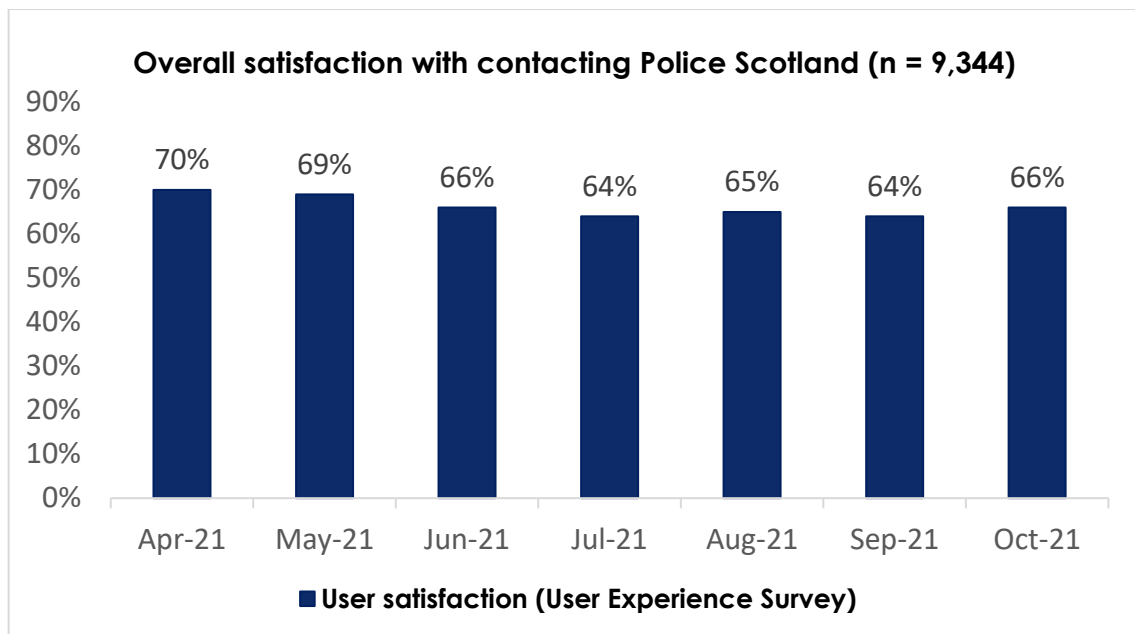




2.24 As Police Scotland prioritises emergency responses the average speed of answer for 999 calls follows the general trend of 999 call demand. As a result the average speed of answer for 101 calls does not follow the 101 call demand trend.

**Public Satisfaction**

2.25 The levels of overall user satisfaction based on the experience of contacting Police Scotland remained stable during Q1 (April –June), Q2 (July-September) and October 2021, as shown in the following table.



2.26 Between Q1 and Q2 there was a significant drop in the proportion of respondents who found contacting Police Scotland easy. In Q1 75% of respondents considered contacting Police Scotland easy or very easy, compared to 67% of respondents in Q2. Between August and October 2021, there is a statistically significant increase in survey respondents who rated contact easy or very easy. In October 69% of respondents considered contacting the police to be easy, compared to 64% of respondents in August 2021.

2.27 The following table provides information regarding the percentage points at different contact touchpoints in August, September and October 2021. The biggest improvements relate to the ease of contact and staff properly understanding the callers’ needs.

Question			
	August (n=1309)	September (n=1242)	October (n=1215) *green indicates a sig diff since Aug
How easy or difficult was it to contact Police Scotland? (% Easy & very easy)	64%	68%	69%
During the initial contact how satisfied are you with the way you were treated by the staff member? (% Satisfied & very satisfied)	82%	83%	84%
Did you feel staff properly understood what you needed? (% Yes)	83%	86%	86%
Do you feel that the police provided the appropriate response to the incident you reported? (% Yes)	63%	63%	63%
How satisfied are you with the way you were treated by the officers who attended the incident? (% Satisfied & very satisfied)	80%	78%	80%
Were you adequately informed about the progress of the incident you reported? (% Yes)	58%	55%	58%
Based on your overall experience, how satisfied are you with Police Scotland? (% Satisfied & very satisfied)	65%	64%	66%

### **Dispatch / Response Times**

2.28 The CAM was implemented by Police Scotland in a phased approach beginning in June 2019 and completed in June 2020. Under CAM, all decisions around deployment and appropriate resolution of incidents are based on the assessment of threat, risk, harm, investigative opportunity, vulnerability and engagement (THRIVE). Incidents are subject to continuous review throughout their lifecycle to ensure that the principles of CAM and THRIVE are properly applied and that callers receive the most appropriate response at the most appropriate time.

2.29 STORM is the primary system used in the management of police incidents and resources. STORM captures data on the dispatching of incidents as well as updates to the status of resources. Dispatch

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times are automatically logged when a controller mobilises a resource to an incident. The data available from STORM is used as Management Information to determine incident management performance (dispatching a resource to an incident within anticipated timeframes). The arrival of a resource at the locus of an incident is recorded via a manual process and as a result is open to error, therefore response time data are unable to be provided. The Modernised Contact and Engagement Programme recognise the requirement for more meaningful data and a key element of the Programme is the progression of the replacement of command and control systems.

- 2.30 The challenges associated with call handling previously outlined have had a similar impact on Police Scotland's incident management capabilities. As a result of the continuing issues associated with COVID-19 and the return to a less restrictive environment across Scottish society, Police Scotland is experiencing increased absence and self-isolation requirements across Local Policing and C3 Divisions, coupled with a return of significant 'normal' policing demand. This is exacerbated by displaced demand from other public and emergency services who have not yet been able to return to a traditional level of service.
- 2.31 Police Scotland incident management performance remains strong when considered on an average basis across the country on a month to month basis. However, Police Scotland has experienced increased challenges and acute pressures in respect of incident management/response capability, and at particular times and in particular areas, level of demand has exceeded operational capacity to respond.
- 2.32 Recognising the acute challenges and multi-layered causes of the changing dynamic in respect of our operating environment, a short life working group was established by Deputy Chief Constable Kerr, overseen by Assistant Chief Constable Hawkins, designed to enhance and support call handling and response policing capacity and maintain public confidence in policing.
- 2.33 The following measures have or are being implemented as a result:
- 2.34 A review of the reintroduction of the 'COVID-19 Response Model', which was established during the height of the pandemic, which included increased use of telephone diary appointments and maximising the use of remote resolution has been completed and a decision taken that the COVID-19 Response Model is not required to be implemented at this time. However, the ability to implement the

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Model at a divisional level and for short periods only is retained for activation in extraordinary circumstances and where all other resourcing options have been explored.

- 2.35 The Flexible Response Unit (FRU) was initially stood up in March 2019, in preparation for the United Kingdom's planned EU Exit on 29 March 2019. The officers were drawn from various local policing divisions/specialist departments and collectively, provided Police Scotland with the ability to provide mutual aid at short notice, should it be required, and to respond to any civil unrest/disorder or violence within Scotland. The FRU has thereafter continued to support the policing of major events, protests and demonstrations and supporting divisions in business as usual activity.
- 2.36 Due to the increased challenges and acute pressures in respect of incident management/response capability the FRU have been reintegrated to Local Policing Divisions to enhance response capability.
- 2.37 All policing events have also been subject to a challenge panel approach during the period of COP26 to ensure resource requirements are appropriate within risk thresholds. This approach offers a best practice model for all events going forward and provides confidence that informed decisions are being made for all deployments.
- 2.38 Middle Office remodelling options were accelerated to enhance capacity release of deployable officers, from Middle Office functionality, to support priority and business critical operational frontline roles within Local Policing in the short term.
- 2.39 This accounts for release in the short term as it is acknowledged that a significant release of capacity within the Middle Office in a short period may not provide sufficient time to realign or reassign services and/or demand, which the wider work streams being progressed by the Force Middle Office Remodeling is seeking to address. A review will be conducted in 2022.
- 2.40 It should also be noted staff involved in the planning and delivery of COP26 will also be reintegrated into local policing and other specialist areas from 13 December 2021.
- 2.41 In addition to these immediate measures, in the medium to longer term, work continues through the Local Policing Programme to consider options to maximise and enhance the availability of appropriate policing resources to continue to meet demand.

2.42 The immediate measures are considered to be prudent to ensure that Police Scotland response capability is maintained.

### **Longer Term – Modernised Contact and Engagement**

2.43 The full business case for the Unified Communications and Contact Platform (UCCP) project has now been approved by the Police Scotland Change Board, Corporate Finance Board and the SPA Resource Committee. It was presented at the SPA Board on the 24 November 2021 and Scottish Government for approval in December for formal contract award on the 10 January 2022.

2.44 The Contact, Engagement and Resolution Project (CERP) full business case has been approved by the Modernised Contact and Engagement Programme Board and is to be presented at the Change Board on the 1 December 2021 and the SPA Resources Committee on the 17 December 2021.

2.45 The challenge of providing best service to those suffering from distress and mental health issues continues to be significant for Police Scotland and the Mental Health Pathway is now well established, with over 3,000 successful referrals to date.

2.46 Within CERP, the plans to enhance the Pathway with six co-located Mental Health Nurse Practitioners is also progressing, with the intention to establish a cadre of six such practitioners within C3 Division. At this time NHS24 have recruited three such practitioners, with the first expected to start with Police Scotland in the coming weeks.

## **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 There are no additional financial implications associated with this report.

## **4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no additional personnel implications associated with this report.

**5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this paper.

**6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are reputational implications associated with this paper.

6.2 This is in recognition of the relationship between COVID-19 impacts on call answering times and the level on public trust and confidence.

**7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no social implications associated with this paper.

**8. COMMUNITY IMPACT**

8.1 There are community impact implications associated with this paper.

8.2 This is in recognition of the relationship between COVID-19 impacts on call answering times and the potential impact on communities in Scotland.

**9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

**10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are invited to discuss the content of this report.