

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

**SPA Briefing – 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020, 10 - 12 (teleconference)**

**Attendees: Members**

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

**Attendees: Officers**

Lynn Brown (LB)  
John McCroskie (JM)  
Vanessa Ewing (VE)  
Lesley Watson (LW)  
Lynne Clark (LC)

**Introduction**

DC outlined for the Members the purpose of the call, to reinforce the role of SPA in response to the current situation around COVID 19 and to acknowledge that business as usual was carrying on despite difficult circumstances. Members should however be sensitive to those circumstances when requesting additional support or briefing from staff, noting too that Kerry Morgan had returned to SG to focus on COVID 19 related issues.

DC acknowledged that although he and LB have been fully involved in recent discussions on COVID 19 other Members were not fully sighted and today's briefing was arranged to bring everyone up to date with ongoing activities.

**CEO Update**

LB gave a brief overview to Members of the staffing situation within SPA corporate at the moment and how the business continuity measures had been applied. LB also gave an overview of the work that will now be taken forward to deal with emerging COVID 19 issues and to ensure that the full range of SPA's scrutiny and oversight during the pandemic is catalogued in anticipation of future internal and external review and inspection.

**Discussion Themes**

There was a suggestion that a short 1 page document be prepared allowing SPA to articulate their focus over the coming period and to be transparent about intentions.

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The format and frequency of Members getting together to discuss updates on key COVID 19 issues to be considered - suggested weekly - when the weekly summary reports can be discussed. Members also discussed whether there was a requirement for an oversight group. Also should consideration be given to having an earlier public Board meeting.

Discussion on whether the Board Seminar in April could be utilised for a public meeting. SPA also needs to further consider what information is appropriate to go into the public domain and what is not.

While Members have been receiving information on what is being done within policing during this time there is also the need to know what is not being done through business as usual in policing at the moment.

**ACTION: A 1-page document to be developed, agreed by all Members, and shared with Police Scotland, our stakeholders and published on the website on the SPA's response and focus during the COVID outbreak**

**ACTION: Consideration should be given to the format and frequency of the Board briefing meetings during the coming period.**

**ACTION: Consider the viability of utilising the Board Seminar in April for a public Board session.**

### Director of Forensic Services Update

TN briefed the Members on the measure that FS is putting in place during the COVID19 pandemic. This included putting in place the planned business continuity process, the Gold, Silver and Bronze commands and communication flows and the key objectives for FS throughout this phase. A full briefing will be presented to the FS Committee in April.

### Discussion Themes

The Board are now clear on the business continuity response from SPA and FS but is not yet clear on the response from Police Scotland.

PPE was discussed by the Members both in relation to the link to business continuity but also in relation to the training of officers and understanding how this is being tackled by Police Scotland. It would also be important for Members to understand any risks associated with PPE accessibility, training and suitability and the downstream consequences of these. The Members also need to be aware of any plans to downgrade the types of PPE being utilised across the service.

An audit trail is required, of any decision being taken about the types and numbers of scenes being attended by FS and the rationale for these decisions.

ICVS volunteer visits have been suspended. Desktop sampling is now being undertaken. DC had written to all volunteers in relation to the current situation and the letter has been well received by the volunteers with some responding personally. A notice is also posted on the SPA website: <http://www.spa.police.uk/icvs/615215/>

Ways of working have necessarily changed over the past few weeks and there was a discussion on how we maintain some of these positive aspects that have emerged and capitalise on them into post COVID19 working. Examples included the SPRM hearing panels being managed remotely and more generally SPA/PS use of technology to conduct business.

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**ACTION: The SPA should be prepared for the eventuality of any death in service and consider the necessary procedure and response.**

### **Vice Chair Proposal**

DC wanted to bring to the attention of all Members a current issue for discussion. It centres on the ethos of policing by consent and how it is delivered in this type of situation. To date the consent of the public has been commendable however with the holiday weekend approaching, compliance from the public will be put to the test. DC also wanted Members to consider the human rights and equality implications around further use of the new powers and how the SPA provide assurance to the public that they are scrutinising this.

Police Scotland has approached the SPA with a suggestion that work be commissioned from John Scott, QC and that he convenes an Advisory Group along with others such as EHRC, academics, legal and SPA. This group would advise SPA on what is materialising during this unprecedented period and make recommendations. This would provide SPA with an independent perspective on the situation and allow them to take action as appropriate.

### **Feedback on Proposal**

Members made the point that this proposal should be driven forward by SPA but very much with Police Scotland support emphasising the dual operational policing and the public consent approach.

The work has to be carried out in real time so that appropriate responses can be made while still relevant.

There will be a need for ongoing messaging especially if further legislation is being passed through Parliament.

SPA will need to consider how it will respond to additional complaints against police during and after this period.

SPA needs to be sure there is a clear and consistent interpretation and messaging of the new powers.

The proposal to bring forward this work allows SPA to move into the space of human rights which it has not yet done in a structured way.

**ACTION: SPA needs to consider any procurement issues and how this should be handled.**

**ACTION: Decision to be made on whether this proposal needs a formal decision at Board.**

**ACTION: There was an action for a regular public survey to be commissioned as a complementary piece of work with academics being engaged to develop reports on the results for the SPA. This should also be highlighted to Justice Analytical Services.**

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