

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

SPA Board Update – COVID 19 – 11th June 2020, 10 am (by video conference)

Attendees: Members

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

Attendees: Officers

Tom Nelson (TN)
Barry Sillers (BS)
John McCroskie (JM)
Catherine McIntyre (CM)
Lynne Clark (LC)
Vanessa Ewing (VE)
Lynn Brown (LB)

Apologies:

Jane Ryder (JR)

Introduction

DC welcomed Members to the meeting and invited TN to provide Members with an update.

Director of Forensic Services Update

TN updated Members on the good stock management of PPE currently within Forensic Services noting a slight, although not immediate, concern about maintaining the supply of gloves more so as we move into July. The high consumption of gloves had not previously been appreciated and FS are now looking to see if there are new ways of reducing this consumption while maintaining quality.

Staff absence is currently showing 2 staff members with COVID related absence, 12 shielding, with 90% availability overall. There have been no positive tests for COVID within FS.

Following on from the FS site health & safety visits mentioned at last week's update, all 4 sites have now been visited and the reports completed. While the reports were positive any resulting recommendations are now being worked through. The site visits are now being extended to include the scene examination satellite offices to offer any recommendations for ongoing improvement. An information pack has now been issued to all staff.

Meetings with COPFS and PS have been progressing and new propositions for demand and prioritisation are being well received. A follow up meeting next week will focus on putting in place short and long term proposals.

TH welcomed these discussions and hoped it would lead to formalising service level agreements. TN agreed and noted that the output would set a baseline and this would be presented to the FS committee in July.

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SPA Chief Executive Update

There are currently no staff absences in corporate SPA and 1 person is shielding. LB stated that SPA staff are now being encouraged to take annual leave.

SPA are involved in the PS group looking at ways to get staff back into work as part of the next phase of easing lockdown. This group includes ICT, estates, HR etc. LB also confirmed that SPA would be working on this at the same pace as the rest of the organisation and will continue to follow SG guidelines.

LB informed Members that the Finance update from PS would now be issued monthly instead of weekly with the next report going to the Resources Committee on 16 June. Both LB and EW felt that monthly reporting was appropriate due to the level of confidence in the financial reporting. LB also confirmed that COVID 19 related issues will continue to be overseen at the SPA committees.

LB asked Members to note that SPA was going into a period of uncertainty for staff as the SPA 2020 progressed. The Tier 2 proposals were going to be presented to JNCC today which would mean the consultation for those involved at that level would begin next week. The rest of the structure was scheduled to go through JNCC at a special meeting on the 25 June followed by full staff consultation thereafter.

LB noted that the Annual report and accounts (ARA) was on schedule.

DC reinforced LB's point on staff restructure noting that staff were dealing with lockdown, restructure and SPRM at this time.

Police Scotland Weekly Report

DC asked for questions and observations from Board Members.

EW noted that absence numbers were down both in relation to COVID and normal absence reporting, with 85 % availability as opposed to the normal rate of around 70%. EW stated that this may be a cause for concern in the future if related to annual leave and not being managed. EW questioned whether there may be an operational need for the extra 15% of workforce at this time.

TH raised a point of note around incident levels going up but less than last year at this time and where this increase in demand was coming from.

MP also raised the question of the rising number of incidents and the link to the increase in demand for custody.

It was agreed that the content of this weekly reporting would be explored further at the Resources Committee next week. DC stated it was important to have an interpretation of these reports and asked whether given the material coming from IAG and other sources there was more the Board should be collecting and considering.

JM noted that the sources of information together included the reporting from the Victim Taskforce being collected through the IAG, the work through the OpTICAL Group including the disaggregation of the existing data and the data coming through from the 2 waves of the public survey. ME added that the next report from John Scott QC, the Chair of the IAG would be at the Board on 30th June focussing on the use of the temporary powers for policing during the lockdown. ME also mentioned the officer survey work being undertaken by HMICS. Board Members also noted the discussions which had taken place at the Justice Sub Committee on Policing on 9th June.

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The Members discussed the importance of understanding the context of all the data and their role in ensuring PS was taking all necessary steps to learn from it. It was also noted that it is important to use the independent reports coming forward to allow SPA to push into other areas where they could reasonably influence and add value.

The Board Members agreed it was important for the SPA to have a position on all the data and information collated to date and debated the timing of this and the areas most appropriate for the Board to comment on.

ACTION: DC will explore with LB and team the best way forward to express Board positioning and the timing of any communications.

The Members went on to discuss the timing and content of the next wave of the public opinion survey. There was a general consensus that as the first 2 waves had focussed on public confidence during lockdown and that the results had been positive this then be acknowledged by SPA. The 3rd and final wave should reflect the next phase as the country moves into further easing of the lockdown restrictions. This would then be undertaken after the Board meeting on 30th June. It was also noted that in this fast paced environment the situation could change in the space of the next few weeks in the run up to the Board.

Closing Remarks

DC thanked everyone for their time and closed the meeting.

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