



Authority Meeting

26 June 2025

Minutes of the Authority Meeting held on Thursday 22 May 2025 at The Clayton Hotel, Glasgow

Board Members present:	Fiona McQueen (Chair) Chris Creegan Paul Edie Tom Halpin Alasdair Hay Pauline Howie Katharina Kasper Angela Leitch Mary Pitcaithly
Board Member apologies:	None
In attendance:	<p>Scottish Police Authority Lynn Brown, Chief Executive Karen Vallance, Governance Support Officer</p> <p>Police Scotland Chief Constable Jo Farrell Deputy Chief Constable Alan Speirs Deputy Chief Constable Bex Smith James Gray, Chief Financial Officer</p> <p>Forensic Services Fiona Douglas, Director</p> <p>National Crime Agency Graeme Biggar, Director General</p>

1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

1.1 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all Authority Members, representatives from Police Scotland's senior leadership team and Grame Biggar from the National Crime Agency (NCA).

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 10-13)

Members agreed that, in accordance with paragraph 20 of the SPA Standing Orders, the Authority would consider items 10-13 in private for the reasons set out on the agenda.

2. MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 MINUTE FROM MEETING HELD ON 27 MARCH 2025 FOR APPROVAL

Members approved the minute from the meeting held 27 March 2025.

2.2 ROLLING ACTION LOG

Noting the one action was proposed ongoing, the Chair proposed to close it on the basis the data would be reported to an appropriate Committee.

Members agreed to close the action on the log.

2.3 DECISIONS SINCE LAST MEETING

Members noted two decisions had been made via correspondence since the last public Authority meeting. One to appoint a temporary Assistant Chief Constable, and one to appoint a Vice Chair and amend memberships of Committee, Oversight Groups and other bodies.

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 the National Conversation on the use of Live Facial Recognition Technology by policing

and thanked the public, stakeholders and interest groups who had engaged in the conversation. The Chair commented that it was an innovative engagement approach and a good example of the principles of early engagement that underpin the Memorandum of Understanding.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Members sought feedback on the three virtual regional scrutiny engagement sessions. The Chair advised that the agendas were similar but there were differences in discussion. Rural areas focussed on different areas to urban, however, local policing model implementation and youth violence were recurring themes. The Chair thanked the conveners for their frankness and discussion.
- Regarding the Supreme Court judgment on the legal definition of a 'woman' for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010, Members asked if the estates masterplan was compliant to which Chief Constable Jo Farrell (CCFarrell) confirmed it was. DCC Alan Speirs (DCCSpeirs) added that committing to a review helped ensure focus, and the organisation was sensitive and attentive to both the workforce and communities. Members heard Police Scotland were working through the Equality Human Rights Commission guidance during the consultation period and were liaising with the NPCC to arrive at a UK policing position. DCCSpeirs confirmed a substantive update would be provided to the June Policing Performance Committee.
- Noting the judgement would have implications for a small number of trans identifying staff, assurance was sought that the transitioning at work policy review would be handled sensitivity. DCCSpeirs advised a collaboration group had been set up to allow engagement with staff associations and there was direct engagement with those members of staff who would be impacted.
- In light of the judgement, Members questioned if any operational guidance had been issued. DCCSpeirs advised that staff were kept engaged through communications but confirmed that the judgement has had no direct impact on day-to-day operational policing.
- CCFarrell stated that other public sector bodies have reacted quickly, but she felt there was a risk in mis-stepping and having to reset if a review was done at pace. CCFarrell highlighted the objective is to do it once and do it right, considering all views and legislation.
- Members sought assurance that all interested groups and associations have been engaged with. DCCSpeirs confirmed Police Scotland had reached out to interested parties and currently 20 organisations will be represented at the stakeholder event scheduled for 29 May, including the Scottish Women's Development Forum. Advising that the stakeholder event would not be a one-off event, DCCSpeirs reiterated that any groups who have an interest will be afforded the opportunity to be engaged with.

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:

- Forensic Services Committee
- Legal Committee
- Policing Together Oversight Group

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 addition to the report, the following points were also raised:

- CCFarrell commented on recent incidents at Scottish beaches during 17 and 18 May, confirming an arrest had been made regarding the death of Kayden Moy.
- CCFarrell commented that violent crime is at historically low levels however there was concern about trends around violent crime committed by and against young people and the proportion that happens in and around schools. She stressed it was on policing and partners, local authorities and the third sector to work together to prevent violence and reduce harm.
- CCFarrell highlighted that there were around 40,000 recorded stop and search incidents last year, and about one in four had a positive return, with over 900 weapons recovered. Of those 900 weapons, over 200 were recovered from people aged 17 or under. She confirmed there was a high compliance rate with the code of practice and an online dashboard provided accountability and transparency around its use.
- CCFarrell summarised some of the partnership work and initiatives aimed at reducing youth violence. These included: Medics Against Violence, Fearless, the "Do The Right Thing" programme, the Supporting Opportunities for Life project, the "No Knives, Better Lives" programme and the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit's "Quit Fighting for Likes" campaign.
- CCFarrell provided an update on the football related disorder in Glasgow on 17 May, confirming 20 people have been arrested, 17 have been charged and 4 have been reported in connection with

offences. She advised 320 officers were involved in the response, away from other community duties. CCFarrell committed to continue to work with clubs and other partners and stated the ideal scenario would be an agreed and organised event that ensures safety and security, minimises wider disruption and which could also create economic opportunities

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Members asked what more can be done to reduce knife crime. CCFarrell responded that the policing focus was having a clear presence in areas where youth are known to gather, to set a tone and prevent escalation and anti-social behaviour. CCFarrell commented that an intelligence led approach is taken but reiterated the requirement for a system wide approach from partners.
- Praise was given to Police Scotland's contribution to the national discussion on live facial recognition.
- Members sought more comment on the approach to policing football disorder. CCFarrell highlighted that those involved in the co-ordinated violence were the minority but there had been an impact on residents, tourism, business owners and it had a taxpayer cost. CCFarrell stated there is a requirement to bring safety controls to these celebrations and it requires co-operation from clubs, the Scottish Football Association, Local Authorities and fans. She reiterated that the ideal scenario is an organised celebration to minimise the impact on the public. Members were informed Scottish Government have arranged a round table event to discuss disorder and Police Scotland will attend.
- Members sought comment on the role of Special Constables in Police Scotland's 2030 vision. CCFarrell stated that a key part to delivering the vision in terms of safer communities and strengthening the community model is increasing Special Constables. The work of Special Constables will be included within the draft Volunteering Strategy that is expected to be brought through governance for approval.
- Members sought further feedback from the engagement with leader sessions. DCC Bex Smith (DCCSmith) commented that the events were valuable as they provided the executive team the opportunity to speak extensively to leaders who were given the opportunity to ask questions. Members heard the biggest area of feedback was on transparency and they were informed that further events would be scheduled in the future.
- Members questioned how success of the new cyber and fraud unit can be measured. DCCSmith advised that new resource has not been brought in but instead areas and roles have been re-parented to bring everything under one place. The unit has both officers and

staff including specialist skilled staff. Members heard performance metrics are strong however work is continuing to understand what good looks like across the UK.

- Members sought further information on learning from the Investigatory Powers Commissioner. CCFarrell advised that the ICO and his team have scrutiny over the use of investigatory powers which is a complex area of business and has a level of intrusion. The role of the commission is to ensure Police Scotland are compliant with the law and proportionate in its use. CCFarrell assured Members that Police Scotland have a strong relationship with the ICO office and seek their advice regarding the use of powers as technology evolves.
- Members sought comment on Operation Begonia and whether there is a link between prostitution and serious and organised crime. DCCSmith responded that it is an area that is difficult to see results, but time has been spent investing and certain methods should help indicate results. DCCSmith stated that criminal justice outcomes have indicated links between human trafficking and prostitution and there has been working group established to discuss how the issue is tackled. Members were assured that Police Scotland were engaged in the private member's bill for the Scottish Parliament on tackling prostitution.

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.

Members sought further comment on the programme for government in regard to mental health commitments and policing. LBrown commented on the governance structure, advising there was an oversight board within Scottish Government chaired by a Director, with working groups underneath. CCFarrell commented that there were a number of recommendations related to mental health. Whilst there have been good examples of cross-agency provision at local level, there was not a consistent approach so the momentum of work in the area was welcomed.

Members noted the report.

7. FORENSIC SERVICES DIRECTOR'S 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.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Regarding the demand drug driving toxicology, Members questioned how the financial risk will be managed in year. FDouglas advised that the risk will be mitigated through additional outsourcing to ensure statutory time limits are met.
- Members sought assurance that there are adequate resources from all partners to ensure the long-term sustainable model meets timelines. FDouglas confirmed the project board has been stood up and the project is prioritised. Members were told it was too early to give assurance on meeting timescales, but the group were working against the timescales reported to the Resources Committee - an FBC developed by the end of the financial year.
- Members sought comment on what outcomes came out of the knowledge exchange event. FDouglas confirmed multiple stakeholders were involved in the discussion, with interesting insights on how digital forensics and more traditional forensics can work together. Members heard the event was helpful to the development of the Research and Innovation Strategy.
- Members sought comment on the final stage of implementation of the operating model. FDouglas advised this was the 4th phase which focuses on implemented changes, work on how drug cases are progressed and fingerprint digitalisation.

Members noted the report.

8. FORENSIC SERVICES STRATEGY

Members considered the refreshed Forensic Services Strategy which had been discussed and recommended for approval by the Forensic Services Committee. FDouglas highlighted a number of key points as detailed in the paper.

Members sought comment on the broad assumptions for costs and funding and what other risks there were for delivery? FDouglas stated that the financial assumption is that Forensic Services continue to manage the budget. Members heard there were two main investments: core operating solution which is subject to a separate FBC, and the long-term

sustainable model for criminal toxicology. Members were assured there was no significant risk out with the financial risks.

Members approved the refreshed Forensic Services Strategy

9. NCA UPDATE

Members considered the report which provided detail on NCA's performance in Scotland. Graeme Biggar (GBiggar) highlighted a number of key points as detailed in the paper and provided an overview of recent NCA work.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Members sought comment on how the NCA manages capacity. GBiggar responded that the NCA is primarily pro-active, so it can choose what to focus on by analysing crime patterns to determine what will have the biggest impact. GBiggar summarised two areas where the NCA are reactive. One is disseminating referrals from the US organisation- National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children to UK forces. Demand is increasing and approximately 850 referrals are sent per week. The NCA work with tech companies to reduce harm on their systems and to help identify risks. The second area is border referrals as a greater amount of cannabis is being imported as it is cheaper to produce in other countries. The NCA are working with Border Force and airlines to help prevention.
- Members asked how the NCA increase public confidence. GBiggar responded that the NCA are increasing the amount of information they provide to the public, mainly by highlighting their successes, speaking in public about how people can stay safe, and sharing communications with school children and parents.
- Members sought comment on the efforts and trends relating to money laundering. GBiggar commented that previously proceeds of drugs was typically cash money laundering, and digital crime was crypto, however in recent years these have merged. GBiggar provided an example of an investigation and destabilisation of a Russian national level organised crime group. GBiggar advised that money laundering through crypto was increasing as was the use of fintech (financial technology).
- Referring to an earlier question at Item 5 on human trafficking, GBiggar assured Members that the NCA work with Police Scotland to investigate trafficking of women for sexual exploitation.
- Regarding the referrals from the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, Members asked how the referral information is used and how successful they are for stopping crime. GBiggar commented that the annual assessment report shows roughly

800,000 adults pose some degree of sexual risk to children due to the internet giving opportunity, radicalising and normalising the behaviour for certain people. GBiggar acknowledged the referrals were challenging for police forces as it placed demand on them by exposing crime which is happening. DCCSmith agreed they increased demand, but it cannot be ignored so Police Scotland grade each referral, and each one is responded to accordingly. DCCSmith advised that investing in technology and resource would help in responding to digital crime such as the online abuse of children. GBiggar highlighted that the UK Government have passed the Online Safety Act which places obligations on companies to change the way their systems work to make them safer for children. NCA have secondees within Ofcom to help support this.

- CCFarrell thanked GBiggar for the NCA's support to Police Scotland, commenting that the partnership has helped Police Scotland to identify trends and methodologies, and assisted in establishing the cyber and fraud division. CCFarrell stressed that the current impact and reach through the partnership with NCA would not be possible if Scotland still had eight legacy forces.

Members noted the report.

The remaining items were taken in private.