



Forensic Services Committee

5 February 2026

Item 6: Committee Effectiveness Report

Presented by: Karen Vallance, Governance Support Officer

Appendix: Forensic Services Committee - Survey Results

Purpose

This report provides the Forensic Services Committee with the findings of a recent survey conducted with Members and stakeholders, seeking their feedback on the overall effectiveness of the committee. The report seeks to inform both the overall evaluation of the committee’s effectiveness during 2025/26 and the subsequent assurance report to the Audit Risk and Assurance Committee in May 2026.

The paper is presented in line with the Authority’s Corporate Governance Framework and committee Terms of Reference.

Recommendation

For Discussion

Members are invited to discuss the content of this report and any areas for improvement.

Strategic Alignment

Strategic alignment	S05 SPA Corporate Strategy
Risk alignment	SPA SR06 – SPA Governance
Prior governance	N/A
Stakeholder engagement	The views of stakeholders who responded to a committee effectiveness survey are outlined in this report.

Implications

Community		Data & Privacy		Environmental	
Equalities & Human Rights	X	Financial		Health, Safety & Wellbeing	
Legal		Workforce			

Report Detail

1. Background

- 1.1 The Scottish Police Authority (the Authority) is committed to continuous improvement in the discharge of its responsibilities and its oversight and support for policing in Scotland. The Authority's Corporate Governance Framework is subject to annual review with the most recent updates approved by the Authority in November 2025. In addition, the Authority considers the effectiveness of all of its committees annually through a process of self-assessment.
- 1.2 The review process was strengthened in 2024/25, with the views of stakeholders who attend committee meetings on the effectiveness of each committee.
- 1.3 Members and stakeholders were invited to complete the survey anonymously to encourage free and frank feedback.
- 1.4 The Authority is reporting the findings on each committee to public sessions of meetings to support accountability and transparency.

2. Further detail

- 2.1 There are no specific requirements or direction on how public bodies should undertake effectiveness reviews. The Authority considers a range of relevant documents including '[On Board](#)' guidance, the Scottish Government [Audit and Assurance Committee Handbook](#) and the CIPFA [Good Governance Standard for Public Services](#).
- 2.2 To offer both insight and trend analysis, the survey for 2025/26 sought feedback on the same four key areas as the 2024/25 survey:
 - Reporting to committee
 - Committee priorities and progress
 - Members' capability and overall operation of the Committee
 - Delivery against the Terms of Reference
- 2.3 All members of the Forensic Services Committee in post between April 2025 and December 2025 completed the survey. Six responses were submitted by stakeholders, with four commenting on the Forensic Services Committee.

3. Survey Findings

- 3.1 The findings and feedback from Members and stakeholders are set out in full in the attached Appendix. Overall the results for the Forensic Services Committee are extremely positive, with very few areas of concern being raised, or areas where improvements could be made.
- 3.2 Members may wish to discuss the findings in relation to quality, clarity and accessibility (e.g. Plain English) of Committee papers.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 Findings from this committee effectiveness process and Members' considerations will support continuous improvement and inform the committee workplan and priorities for the year ahead.
- 4.2 It will also inform the overall evaluation of the committee's effectiveness during 2025/26 through assurance reporting to the Audit Risk and Assurance Committee in May 2026.

5. Strategic alignment detail

5.1 Strategic alignment to strategic police plan and other key enabling strategies

Strategic alignment	SPA SO5 – We are a learning organisation, where decision making and scrutiny are evidence led.
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- 5.1.1 Regular review of committee effectiveness contributes to the Authority's commitment to continuous improvement.

5.2 Alignment to risk register and risk appetite

Risk alignment	SPA SR06 – SPA Governance
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- 5.2.1 Regular review of committee effectiveness seeks to ensure the Authority's governance and oversight of policing in Scotland is proportionate, robust and effective.

5.3 Prior governance

Prior governance	N/A
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5.3.1 In the first instance, Member and stakeholder feedback is presented to the Forensic Services Committee for consideration.

5.4 Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement	The views of stakeholders who responded to a committee effectiveness survey are outlined in this report.
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5.4.1 Stakeholders who contributed to and/or attended an Authority committee during this financial year (2025/26) were invited to complete a survey and offer comments. Stakeholders invited to provide their view are listed below:

- Police Scotland
- Forensic Services
- PIRC
- COSLA
- Crown Office
- Scottish Government
- HMICS
- Biometrics Commissioner
- National Crime Agency
- Internal/External Audit
- ASPS
- SPF
- Unison
- Unite

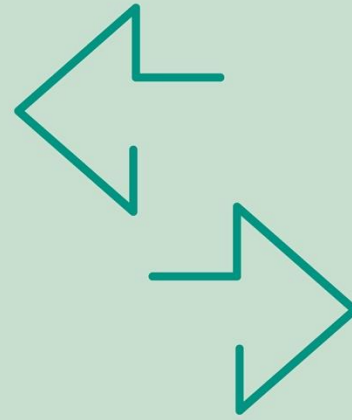
6. Implications detail

Community		Data & Privacy		Environmental	
Equalities & Human Rights	X	Financial		Health, Safety & Wellbeing	
Legal		Workforce			

- 6.1 Annual review of committee effectiveness contributes to the Authority’s efforts to improve its governance of policing.
- 6.2 Feedback may have an impact which will inform the Annual Review of Governance which is subject to an Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment. The most recent EqHIRA was published in November 2025.

Committee Effectiveness 2025/26

Forensics Services Committee
5 February 2026



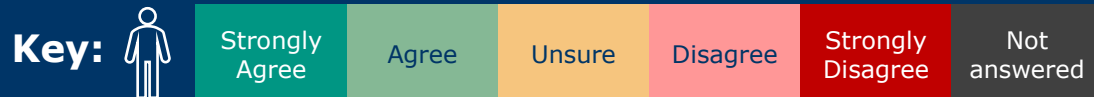
SCOTTISH POLICE
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Members survey results

Analysis

- Five Members responded to the survey.
- The responses to questions in the survey used the coloured scale set out below. The tables show how many Members gave a particular response to each question



Findings: quality of meeting papers

Survey question	2024/25	2025/26	Trend
1. The quality of committee papers allows Members to perform their roles effectively			↓
2. Overall, reports are clear and easy to understand, and suitable for a non-executive audience			↓
3. Papers make clear what the committee is being asked to do			↔
4. Equality, human rights or community impacts are increasingly reflected in reports to the committee			↑
5. Overall, the quality of committee papers is improving			↔

Analysis of survey findings

- While members still agree on the quality of Committee papers, it should be noted this is either the same as or not as strong as in 2024/25.
- There was improvement in the perception that Equality, human rights or community impacts are increasingly reflected in Committee reports.

Comments

- Two comments were received for this section. One noted the reports for the Forensic Services Committee continued to improve each year. The other commented there were, at times, overlap between the content of reports.

Findings: strategic focus

Survey question	2024/25	2025/26	Trend
1. The committee ensures visibility on matters of significant public interest			↑
2. Work plans reflect key strategic priorities			↔
3. The committee's work has reflected the focus on organisational culture			↑
4. The committee's work has reflected issues around capacity and capability			↑
5. The committee has processes in place to allow members to track progress of ongoing work			↑
6. Committees follow up on reports to seek evidence of implementation and impact:			↔
7. Decisions and action log actions are tracked and implemented in line with the timescale set out:			↑










Analysis of survey findings

- There is clear agreement among Members that Committees have a strong strategic focus and are effectively tracking and following up on actions and their impact. All indicators either remain the same or show improvement from 2024/25.

Comments

- Two comments were received.
- One noted the improvement in alignment to Authority and Police Scotland's strategic priorities. They also highlighted that decisions are logged and followed up by the Chair of the Committee at meetings and where they slip it is noted and new dates set.
- The second comment again highlighted that it would be helpful to decrease the overlap between the reports to increase clarity of focus on progress and priorities.

Findings: capability of Members

Survey question	2024/25	2025/26	Trend
1. Members are confident in agreeing a position on specific issues and in decision making			
2. Members provide genuine challenge, as well as seek clarification and / or reassurance			
3. Committee members have the right balance of experience, knowledge and skill to fulfil the committee's role			

Analysis of survey findings

- All agree that Members are confident, agree positions, provide genuine challenge, seeks assurances, and have the right balance of skills, knowledge and experience.

Comments

- One comment was received for this section.
- They highlighted there was a “good blend” of experience amongst the members on the Committee.

Findings: governance support

Survey question	2024/25	2025/26	Trend
1. The committee is advised and confident about when to consider items in private session			↑
2. Minutes of meetings are accurate, clear and contain an appropriate level of detail			↑
3. The committee's remit remains relevant, manageable and fit for purpose			↔

Analysis of survey findings

- All agree that Members that the Committee receives appropriate advice on taking certain agenda items in private, that minutes of meetings are of a high standard, and that the Committee's remit is fit for purpose. All indicators either remain the same or show improvement on the position in 2024/25.

Terms of Reference

- All five Members indicated that the Committee is fully discharging its responsibilities in line with its terms of reference.



Stakeholder survey results

Analysis

- Six stakeholders responded to the survey of which four noted they attended Forensics Committee.
- The responses to questions in the survey used the coloured scale set out below. The tables show how many Members gave a particular response to each question
- Results from the prior year are not available for stakeholders.

Key:



Strongly
Agree

Agree








Unsure

Disagree

Strongly
Disagree

Not
answered

Findings: stakeholder responses

Survey question	2025/26
1. The Committee has priorities which are clear and understood.	
2. The Committee workplan is clear, aligned to its priorities and considered regularly in public sessions	
3. We aim to circulate papers to Committee attendees a week in advance, and publish on the Authority's website three days in advance. This is enough time to consider the papers provided	
4. Reports are clear and easy to understand.	
5. It is clear from reports what the Committee is being asked to do.	
6. The Committee Chair is effective in managing the meeting and allowing all participants to contribute.	
7. The Committee Chair is effective in bringing matters to a decision or position.	





Analysis of survey findings

- Feedback indicated agreement that the Committee's priorities, workplan, and reports were clear as well as that the Committee Chair was effective in conducting their role.

Comments

- Priorities & workplan** - Two comments received. They noted the Committee had a strong focus on Forensic Services and associated Authority and Police Scotland activity, and that the workplan was not regularly reviewed in Committee meetings, instead being updated via the secretariat for the Committee. They felt there was an opportunity to develop the workplan further to align with strategic business plans.
- Reports to committee** - One comment was received. It highlighted the risk between greater length of time between submission deadline and the meeting could risk information becoming outdated or new information being missed or only covered verbally. They noted the need for work to ensure reports are more focussed on providing assurance for members.
- Meeting management** - The comment in this section highlighted the frequent opportunities to involve Police Scotland and COPFS in discussions but that this was utilised infrequently. They also felt there was comparably less scrutiny on forensic service matters that were the responsibility of Police Scotland officers. They felt clarity in the Terms of Reference for the Committee on forensic science that is out with SPA Forensic Services would be helpful.

Findings: stakeholder overall effectiveness

Survey question	2025/26
1. The Committee's work enhances transparency and accountability in policing.	
2. The Committee is effective in overseeing policing.	
3. The Committee is effective in supporting policing	
4. Committee members are effective in their questioning and scrutiny of issues.	

Analysis of survey findings

- Feedback indicated agreement of the Committee's work enhancing transparency and accountability in policing and that members are effective in their questioning and scrutiny of issues.
- In relation to overseeing and supporting policing, the picture was more mixed amongst stakeholders and further detail is provided in the qualitative response to this section.

Comments

- One comment received in this section highlighted selecting disagree to 'The Committee is effective in overseeing policing' and 'The Committee is effective in supporting policing' as they relate to policing, not SPA Forensic Services.
- In relation to SPA Forensic Services, they felt the Committee was effective in supporting, but that oversight can sometimes focus too much on the detail and not the strategic direction and operational risk.