SCOTTISH POLICE AUTHORITY
ÙGHDARRAS POILIS NA H-ALBA

Forensic Services Committee

07 May 2026

Item 9: Forensic Services Business Plan

Appendix: Forensic Services Draft Business Plan 2026-2028

Purpose

To present the draft Forensic Services Business Plan for the period 2026 to 2028 for discussion and approval by the Forensic Services Committee.

Recommendation

For Approval

Strategic Alignment

Strategic alignment	Strategic Policing Plan 2026-2029 Forensic Services Strategy 25-30, Strategic Outcomes (SO):- SO1, SO2, SO3 and SO4
Risk alignment	FS Strategic and Operational Risks, including:- Strategic Risks (SR):- SR01, SR02, SR06, SR09 and SR10 FS130, FS107 and FS126
Prior governance	FS Senior Leadership Team review
Stakeholder engagement	Ongoing engagement with Police Scotland, e.g. Procurement, Estates, Digital Division, in relation to services back requirements.

Implications

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

1 Report Detail

1.1 Background

1.2 In May 2025 the Scottish Police Authority approved the Forensic Services Strategy 25-30. This refreshed strategy aims to deliver scientific excellence for safer communities and focuses on consolidation of our Operating Model by embedding the benefits of our new and more flexible ways of working.

1.3 Underpining the Strategy is a business planning process that sets our activities over an 18-24 month period that are prioritised to support delivery of the strategic outcomes and objectives.

1.4 The draft Forensic Services Business Plan 26-28 in Appendix A sets out the prioritised short and medium term activities to support improvement and delivery of our Strategic Outcomes. The Business Plan has 7 key overarching activities, as shown below:-

Strategic Outcomes	Overarching Activities
SO 1- people, positive working environment	• Deliver the Health & Safety Improvement Plan • Deliver the People Plan
SO 2- sustainable, adaptable, resilient	• Deliver Quality improvement • Deliver the Change Programme
SO 3- high-quality and ethical services	• Deliver the Performance Framework
SO 4- work collaboratively	• Deliver forensic science within the budget allocated • Implementation of Strategic Workforce Planning

1.5 Further detail

1.6 The draft Forensic Services Business Plan for 2026-2028 was developed through a structured and inclusive process that centred on collaboration and co-production. Senior leaders engaged with managers across all service areas to gather operational insight, identify what was in the art of the possible, consider risks and emerging challenges, and to understand local priorities.

1.7 The planning sessions provided opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the Business Plan, refining proposals and setting clear priorities for the coming 18-24 months. This collaborative approach fosters a strong sense of shared ownership, consensus and a commitment to deliver.

1.8 A key principle in developing the Business Plan was to strike the balance between ambition and achievability. While the plan sets out clear priorities for improvement and innovation, care was taken to ensure that commitments remain realistic within the available resources and operational constraints. This approach aims to support sustainable delivery and measurable progress.

1.9 The plan builds on progress already made through the 2024-2026 Business Plan, with a number of activities and commitments carried forward where they remain relevant and beneficial.

1.10 Our Forensic Services Performance Framework was approved in February 2026, and outlines the key internal processes through which Forensic Services sets, delivers, monitors and reports on its priorities. The draft Business Plan is intrinsically linked to the Performance Framework as it highlights the short to medium term activity that needs to be prioritised to support improvement in organisational performance.

1.11 Further alignment is also shown to the joint Audit Scotland and HMICS audit of "Best value in policing" which was reported in January 2026. Recommendations within the joint report align with the Business Plan, for example, sustainability, strategic workforce planning and continuous improvement.

1.12 The Business Plan is firmly aligned with the Forensic Services Strategy 25-30, ensuring that short to medium term priorities directly contribute to longer-term strategic outcomes. It also supports the objectives set out in the Strategic Police Plan, clearly linking national policing priorities and the work of Forensic Services, reinforcing the critical role of Forensic Services in supporting policing outcomes.

1.13 It is proposed that progress against the Business Plan 2026-2028, will be monitored through the quarterly Forensic Services Performance

Report to the Forensic Services Committee. This will ensure transparency, accountability and scrutiny.

1.14 To ensure the Business Plan remains responsive and effective, there will be an annual review process.

1.15 Overall, the development process has resulted in a draft Business Plan that is ambitious but achievable, has strategic alignment and sets clear priorities for Forensic Services.

2 Strategic alignment detail

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

Strategic alignment	Strategic Policing Plan 2026-2029 Forensic Services Strategy 25-30, Strategic Outcomes (SO):- SO1- Our people are empowered to provide excellent forensic science in a positive working environment SO2- We are sustainable, adaptable, and resilient to future challenges SO3- We deliver high-quality and ethical services through innovative forensic science SO4- We work collaboratively with partners to serve the needs of the public and criminal justice in Scotland

2.2 The draft Business Plan has been developed with clear alignment to the Forensic Services Strategy 25-30 as shown in Appendix A. The Plan also supports the delivery of the strategic outcomes set out in the Police Scotland Strategic Policing Plan and delivery of the recommendations in the joint Audit Scotland and HMICS review of "Best Value in policing".

2.3 Alignment to risk register and risk appetite

Risk alignment	Forensic Services Strategic and Operational Risk Registers

2.4 Forensic Services has a risk management framework that supports a bottom-up approach to the escalation of risk, with capability / team, operational and strategic risk registers in place.

2.5 The draft Business Plan has been developed with risk management as a key principle, with the activities identified as key mitigations to reduce risk.

2.6 Prior governance

Prior governance	Forensic Services Senior Leadership Team review

2.7 As described in Section 1, the draft Business Plan has been developed in collaboration with leaders, managers and teams across Forensic Services.

2.8 Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement	Ongoing engagement with Police Scotland, e.g. Procurement, Estates, Digital Division, in relation to services back requirements.

2.9 Interdependencies exist with Police Scotland, particularly through service back arrangements, to enable delivery of key activities in the draft Business Plan. Engagement continues to ensure that all stakeholders are clear on the more detailed requirements.

2.10 The Forensic Services Corporate Services Board is a well established and key governance meeting to monitor progress against the Business Plan.

3 Implications detail

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

3.1 A number of activities outlined in the Business Plan support our people and the strategic outcome "our people are empowered to provide excellent forensic services in a positive working environment". Therefore, there are workforce and health, safety and wellbeing implications which aim to make improvements in this area.

3.2 There are financial implications for the Core Operating System (COS) and Long term sustainable model for Toxicology which will be outlined in the full business cases (FBCs).

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Appendix A- Forensic Services Draft Business Plan 2026-2028

Strategic Outcome 1				
Our people are empowered to provide excellent forensic services in a positive working environment				
Strategic Objectives				
Develop our culture to ensure that everyone can be at their best, valuing our differences				
Demonstrate inclusive leadership that promotes respect for all our people				
Provide training and development that supports collaboration, innovation and continuous improvement				
No.	**Activity**	**Key Deliverables**	**Date**	**Accountable**
1.	**Deliver the Health and Safety Improvement Plan** Why this is important – to ensure that health and safety practices across Forensic Services are compliant with legal requirements, and to foster a positive Health and Safety culture which embraces continuous improvement.	Deliver accredited external Health and Safety training to available staff and management.	End Q1 26/27 (then ongoing basis)	Director of FS
		Develop overarching Health and Safety Manual, aligned with principles of best practice.	End Q3 26/27	Director of FS
		Critical review of all Risk Assessments and Safe Systems of work (risk-based prioritisation)	End Q4 27/28 (then ongoing basis)	Director of FS
2.	**Deliver the FS People Plan** Why this is important- to ensure that our people feel empowered and work in a culture that values all our	Deliver Staff Survey Action Plan and our approach to Inclusivity	Ongoing basis	Director of FS
		Implement Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny) Scotland Act 2025 requirements across Forensic Services.	End Q4 26/27	Senior Leadership Team

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	differences; a culture where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and be at their best.	Implement Search & Recovery Scenes revised shift pattern	End Q3 26/27 (subject to consultation)	Head of Function
		Deliver Active Bystander Training to all staff	End Q4 26/27	Director of FS
		Extend Psychological Supervision programme	End Q2 26/27	Heads of Forensic Business Management & Communications

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Strategic Outcome 2				
We are sustainable, adaptable, and resilient to future challenges				
Strategic Objectives				
Provide high-quality, flexible forensic services that meet the changing needs of communities and partners				
Embed environmental sustainability into all decision making				
Embrace technological innovation to advance forensic science				
No.	**Activity**	**Key Deliverables**	**Date**	**Accountable**
3.	**Deliver Quality Improvement** Why this is important- to ensure the ongoing compliance and continuous improvement in the Forensic Services Quality Management System, providing internal and external assurance on the quality of the forensic activities conducted for our partners and the public	Delivery of the Quality Improvement Plan	End Q4 26/27	Senior Leadership Team
		Implement a new electronic quality management system	End Q3 26/27	Head of Quality & Assurance
4.	**Deliver the Change Programme** Why this is important-	Develop a Full Business Case to secure funding for a new Core Operating System (COS), including the associated data migration requirements	End Q3 26/27	Head of Change & Development

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	to ensure that Forensic Services implement systems and processes that improve efficiency and effectiveness of forensic science delivery for our partners and the public	Develop a Full Business Case for a Long-Term Sustainable Model (LTSM) for Toxicology in Scotland	End Q3 26/27	Head of Change & Development
		Implement a centralised purchasing approach to deliver efficiencies	End Q4 26/27	Head of Change & Development
		Closure of the Operating Model Project, with reporting of benefits	End Q1 26/27	Head of Change & Development
		Develop a replacement programme for the current automated DNA platforms	End Q4 26/27	Head of Function

Strategic Outcome 3				
We deliver high-quality and ethical services through innovative forensic science				
Strategic Objectives				
Drive research, development, and innovation to improve forensic science and the delivery of our services				
Ensure the highest standards of ethical behaviours and impartiality at all times				
Deliver Best Value and continuous improvement to partners and customers				
No.	**Activity**	**Key Deliverables**	**Date**	**Accountable**
5.	**Deliver the Performance Framework** Why this is important-	Deliver high quality, timely, forensic services to our partners	Ongoing	Chief Operating Officer
		Implementation and review of UKAS Gen 6 requirements across Forensic Services	End Q2 26/27	Heads of Function

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	to deliver high-quality, timely and accountable forensic services that effectively support the criminal justice system and the public	Implementation of the recommendations associated with Best Value self-assessment and external reviews	End Q2 27/28	Chief Operating Officer
		Implementation of the Forensic Services Sustainability Strategy	End Q4 26/27	Head of Function

Strategic Outcome 4				
We work collaboratively with partners to service the needs of the public and criminal justice in Scotland				
Strategic Objectives				
Prioritise work effectively in collaboration with partners to maximise the value of forensic science				
Invest in our partnerships to improve criminal justice and public health outcomes				
Promote the value that Forensic Services deliver for the people of Scotland				
No.	**Activity**	**Key Deliverables**	**Date**	**Accountable**
6.	**Deliver forensic science within the budget allocated.** Why this is important- to ensure financial sustainability while delivering reliable, high-quality forensic science for our partners and the public	Develop and deliver the Efficiencies Plan for 2026/27[1] and 2027/28[2]	End Q4 26/27[1] End Q4 27/28[2]	Budget Holders
		Provide forensic support to the Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games	July-August 2026	Heads of Function

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		Review and update the tripartite Memorandum of Understanding for the provision of Forensic Services in Scotland	End Q3 26/27	Head of Function
		Consider opportunities to enhance existing levels of collaboration with Public Health partners, including response to changing drugs trends	End Q4 26/27	Heads of Function
		In collaboration with the Leverhulme Research Centre for Forensic Science complete the research project into the Value of Forensic Science	End Q1 27/28	Head of Change and Development
No.	**Activity**	**Key Deliverables**	**Date**	**Accountable**
7.	**Implementation of Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP)** Why this is important – to ensure that Forensic Services has the right people, skills and structure to deliver forensic services now and in the future. To use the workforce planning tool to make informed people resource decisions.	Implementation of the recommendations from the Forensic Services Strategic Workforce Plan	End Q2 27/28	Head of Function
		Implementation of the Workforce Planning Tool to aid decision making	End Q2 26/27	Head of Function