

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Scottish Police Authority Meeting</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>30<sup>th</sup> June 2020</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Video-conference</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>Overview of SPA Public Opinion Survey Results during COVID-19</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>Barry Sillers – SPA Director of Strategy and Performance</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Appendix Attached – Yes</b>	

**PURPOSE**

This paper summarises the insight gained from the survey work independently commissioned by the Authority to understand levels of public confidence in policing in Scotland with respect to the emergency measures in force during the lockdown phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**1. STRATEGIC AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The Authority has a statutory duty to keep policing in Scotland under review and to hold the Chief Constable to account for the policing of Scotland. The Authority has also committed, in its recently published Corporate Plan 2020-23<sup>1</sup>, to a vision of *Policing in the Public Interest* based on delivering a set of strategic outcomes, two of which are directly relevant to this paper:
- The public are confident in policing with issues of public interest being addressed transparently, and the voices of communities taken into account in decision-making
  - Decision making, scrutiny and reporting is based on robust evidence and analysis of current and emerging policing issues

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 In April 2020 the Authority commissioned Mark Diffley Consultancy Ltd to undertake national public opinion surveying with respect to the level of confidence in policing and the level of support for the approach taken by Police Scotland in responding to the COVID-19 during the lockdown period.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.spa.police.uk/assets/126884/441011/601841/614096/item8c>

- 2.2 The public opinion survey approach involves three survey 'waves' the first two of which were completed during the initial lockdown phase of the response to the pandemic. The first wave commenced at the end of April and this was followed up by a second wave in mid-May. The questions in these surveys were designed to allow comparators to be drawn with a Great Britain wide survey by Yougov in April and the longer term surveying through the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey which at the time of the surveys was reporting data collected in the year 2017-18.
- 2.3 The first wave survey asked ten questions, utilising questions in the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey to enable comparison, and questions in a recent survey of Great Britain by YouGov Crest. The second wave repeated nine of the initial questions, and added five new questions regarding the public's compliance with lockdown guidance. These additional questions were developed through engagement with the Independent Advisory Group.
- 2.4 The Authority published the key findings from the first two waves on its website in summary reports dated 5 May and 18 May respectively and has also made available the associated data tables. These reports are available on the Authority website along with a number of other COVID-19 oversight related documents via this [link](#)
- 2.5 As part of the Authority's review of the policing system's performance during the lockdown period it was agreed that the SPA executive staff analysis and insight from the survey work would be independently examined and verified by an external agency with experience in the public opinion and research field. Blake Stevenson Research were contracted to provide this external perspective and to support in the compilation of a brief accurate and accessible summary report based on the SPA commissioned data for publication. This report is at Appendix A.
- 2.6 The Authority will keep under review the timing of the third wave which is expected to be launched in the later phases of the Scottish Government roadmap to recovery. The focus of this third wave will be to examine the public's experience of policing across the whole period of the response to the COVID=19 pandemic and to examine in greater detail the impact of the restrictions on those who are in areas of deprivation, those living with disabilities and those from black, asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.

### 3 KEY MESSAGES

3.1 The key messages highlighted through the Authority's published summary reports and reflected in the attached report compiled with Blake Stevenson are summarised below.

- Public Confidence in policing, expressed through opinion on performance during the lockdown period remained high and there was a greater number of people describing the job police were doing as "excellent" in both waves (17%) than had been the case in the SCJS survey in 2018/19 (9%) or in 2017/18 (10%).
- Public Compliance with the public health guidelines and their associated restrictions was very high (80% all and 18% most) and there was a high level of commitment (80%) to continue to comply with these restrictions over an extended period.
- Public support for the approach taken by Police Scotland and the measures used was high (46/42% fully support) and higher than that recorded in the rest of Great Britain (42% fully support).
- There was a greater level of public support for tougher measures in Scotland (28%/35%) than in the rest of Great Britain (14%) and this was seen to increase through the lockdown period.

### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are **no** financial implications associated with this report.

### 5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are **no** personnel implications associated with this report.

### 6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are **no** legal implications in this paper.

### 7. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are **reputational** implications in this paper with regard to the levels of public confidence in and support for the policing approach during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **8. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are **no** direct social implications associated with this paper however the detailed data tables do examine confidence and support across socio-economic groups.

## **9. COMMUNITY IMPACT**

9.1 There are **no** direct community implications associated with this paper however the detailed data tables do examine confidence and support across urban and rural communities and by geographical region.

## **10. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are **no** direct equality implications associated with this paper however the third wave of surveying will examine potential equalities issues in more detail.

## **11. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are **no** environmental implications associated with this paper.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are invited to:

1. Note the key messages and discuss the detail of the report at the Appendix.