



Agenda Item 4.1

Meeting	Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee
Date	6 February 2025
Location	Online
Title of Paper	Police Scotland Best Value Update
Presented By	Patrick Brown, Temporary Director of Strategy & Analysis
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to provide the SPA Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee an overview of Police Scotland Strategic progress and preparations for the Best Value Audit and Inspection.

Members are invited to discuss the contents of the report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, The Chief Constable has a statutory duty to “make arrangements which secure best value for the Police Service”.
- 1.2 The duty is also set out in the Scottish Public Finance Manual (SPFM), which states:
 - To make arrangements to secure **continuous improvement** in performance whilst maintaining an appropriate **balance between quality and cost**; and
 - To have regard to **economy, efficiency, effectiveness**, the **equal opportunities** requirements and to contribute to the achievement of **sustainable development**
- 1.3 Best Value is an organisation-wide concept or approach to running an organisation that is focussed on good governance and effective management of resources, with a focus on continuous improvement, to deliver the best possible outcomes for the public.
- 1.4 Audit Scotland and His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) have informed Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority of plans to undertake a joint Best Value audit and inspection during 2025. It is anticipated that this will commence in April or May. The joint audit and inspection will incorporate the work of the appointed auditor, Grant Thornton.
- 1.5 This is anticipated to be one of the most comprehensive and broad, crosscutting audits and inspections that Police Scotland has undergone. The resulting audit report will be laid in the Scottish Parliament and open to public scrutiny.

2. Best Value

- 2.1 The Chief Constable is the Accountable Officer for Best Value. On the Chief Constable’s behalf Deputy Chief Constable Alan Speirs has strategic responsibility and oversight of Best Value, including the audit and inspection. He is supported by Acting Director of Strategy and Analysis, Patrick Brown.
- 2.2 Under Deputy Chief Constable Speirs oversight, Acting Director Patrick Brown has responsibility for the day to day running of Best Value, supported by the Head of Best Value.

- 2.3 Best Value within Police Scotland takes a systematic approach to self-evaluation and continuous improvement. Aiming to achieve and demonstrate continuous improvement in performance and outcomes through embedding assurance and self-assessment in our usual processes.
- 2.4 Eight Best Value themes have been identified; they are:
- Vision and Leadership
 - Governance and Accountability
 - Effective use of Resources
 - Partnerships and Collaborative Working
 - Working with Communities
 - Sustainability
 - Fairness and Equality
 - Performance Management
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- 2.5 The Governance route for Best Value is via the Police Scotland Performance Board, feeding into the Chief Constables Strategic Leadership Board.

3. Preparation for Audit and Inspection

- 3.1 In preparation for the audit Acting Director Brown is leading a steering group that consists of senior theme leads and key internal stakeholders ensuring Police Scotland's readiness.
- 3.2 Police Scotland's Best Value team are working very closely with Audit and Assurance who are well versed in audits with a wealth of experience in evidence gathering, the audit process itself and tracking recommendations. In readiness for any audit our Audit and Assurance department complete initial stakeholder mapping and planning, which includes looking across previous relevant audits, recommendations, complete bench marking and seek out areas for improvement and good practice, this initial phase is now complete. An internal audit for Best Value was completed in April 2024, the outcome of which is encompassed in our initial planning.
- 3.3 Over 100 senior officers have completed a survey, these responses combined with the highest ever response to our Workforce Survey will help shape the direction of Best Value.
- 3.4 Workshops are being facilitated with theme leads, with attendance tailored to the specific requirements of each theme. These workshops are being conducted collaboratively, with key stakeholders attending such as Audit and Assurance, Continuous Improvement, Change and Service Design actively participating.

- 3.5 As part of the process, theme leads are completing self-assessments for their respective areas. These assessments draw on multiple evidence sources identified through stakeholder mapping, including benchmarking, survey results (such as *Your Voice Matters Survey*), outstanding actions and broader stakeholder feedback. This approach ensures robust and holistic understanding of progress, strengths and areas for improvement.
- 3.6 To validate findings, evidence is being systematically collated to provide clear and credible support for the identified outcomes. The gathered insights will inform a comprehensive evaluation of organisational performance and effectiveness.
- 3.7 Theme leads self-assessments will be scrutinised and validated by the Police Scotland Executive in a star chamber format prior to the audit commencing in order to ensure a robust self-assessment.
- 3.8 The final outputs will be shared with Audit Scotland and HMICS, offering a transparent and evidence-based account of progress, demonstrating alignment with Best Value principles, and ensuring accountability and continuous improvement

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Continuous Improvement is a core strength of Police Scotland, reflecting significant evolution and progress since Police Scotland's inception. This continued commitment to reform has resulted in policing returning £200m to the public purse every year compared to legacy arrangements.
- 4.2 The steering group is dedicated to collating and presenting robust evidence to support Police Scotland's delivery of Best Value. This includes addressing HMICS recommendations, internal audit findings, and benchmarking, and further enhanced by insights from recent organisational surveys.
- 4.3 This comprehensive, evidence-based approach ensures that Police Scotland not only provide Best Value day-to-day but is fully prepared to demonstrate this during the forthcoming audit and inspection. By prioritising transparency, accountability and continuous improvement, we remain steadfast in our commitment to enhancing public trust and confidence, ensuring they are not only maintained but strengthened over time.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There is no financial implications in this report.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct financial implications in this report.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no direct personnel implications in this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no direct legal implications in this report.

9. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no reputational implications in this report.

10. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no social implications in this report.

11. COMMUNITY IMPACT

11.1 There are no community implications in this report.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no equality implications in this report.

13. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

RECOMMENDATION

Members are invited to discuss the contents of the report.