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| Meeting | Authority Meeting |
| Date | 20 May 2020 |
| Location | Video-conference |
| Title of Paper | SPA Vice Chair's Report |
| Presented By | David Crichton, Vice Chair |
| Recommendation to Members | For Discussion |
| Appendix Attached: | No |

PURPOSE

To update Members on the Authority's oversight of the Police Scotland response to the public health emergency and on significant areas of development since the previous Board meeting on 30 April 2020.

The Police Scotland response to COVID-19

I began my last Vice-Chair's report to the 30 April 2020 meeting of the Authority by acknowledging the speed, professionalism and sensitivity of Police Scotland's response to the current public health emergency. Three weeks on, and eight weeks into the lockdown period, I have no reason to change that view. Police Scotland officers and staff have continued to protect the citizens of Scotland in, if anything, increasingly challenging circumstances.

The social and economic impact of the emergency measures is increasingly evident, particularly on our most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. The pace and nature of a gradual easing of restrictions remains unclear, with differences in approach emerging across the four nations. Throughout this, public support for our police service has remained at a remarkably high level and I commend the Police Scotland leadership team and all officers and staff for working so diligently to ensure that.

I also highlighted in my last report the importance of recognising the role of the police service as one of public health protection rather than of legal enforcement. Reduction of the reproduction rate of the virus is highly dependent upon compliance with the continuing restrictions on movement and gatherings, and that in turn is highly dependent upon the role of the police in engaging appropriately with everyone in the community. I am, therefore, encouraged by the detailed work now underway within Police Scotland on how it will have to adjust its response as the lockdown is gradually eased, and in particular the extent to which the service's advice in planning that process is being sought and taken by Government.

The Authority's oversight role

The Authority has continued to exercise its duties in providing maintenance, oversight and scrutiny, adjusting its approach to these new and rapidly changing circumstances. Our overall approach is explained fully on our website, where we are also publishing all the relevant proceedings and papers of the Board and its Committees. The Interim Chief Executive will say more about our approach in her report.

The one aspect I particularly want to highlight here is our work in testing public attitudes to policing of the emergency. I mentioned above the fundamental contribution of Police Scotland in controlling the spread of the COVID-19 virus. That in turn depends upon continuing acceptance by the

public of the unprecedented restrictions on their freedom of movement and activity – maintenance of the core principle of policing by consent.

Part of the Authority's scrutiny role is therefore to understand trends in public acceptance of the policing approach and there are a number of ways in which we are doing this. Police Scotland is conducting its own regular survey of public confidence based on feedback from members of the public who have had contact with the service. The latest results from that are presented later in this meeting.

The Independent Advisory Group chaired by John Scott QC has convened regularly since its first meeting on 16 April, and provides an independent means of testing Police Scotland's application of its temporary powers through a human rights lens. Mr Scott's first report to the Authority on the Group's work is also presented later in this meeting.

In addition, the Authority has commissioned its own independent polling of public attitudes to the additional powers granted to the police service and how they are being exercised. The results of the first round of polling have been received and published on our website, including all of the underlying raw data. The second round of polling has now been completed and at time of writing the results are being compiled. I will be able to say more about the results during the meeting.

These three strands of work will, from their different perspectives, enable the public's degree of acceptance to be tracked continually during the emergency, providing not just a test of the policing response but important input to the wider planning of how the restrictions are to be gradually changed.

I am pleased to say that the early indications from all three sources confirm a remarkable degree of consent and support for the police service at this time but no one is complacent about that and we will monitor carefully the trends over time.

Continued development of the Authority's capacity and capability

Throughout this exceptional period, the Authority has continued to develop its own capacity and capability, building on improvements already made in response to recommendations from Audit Scotland and HMICS. Again, the Interim Chief Executive provides more detail on this in her report to the Board and I am also pleased to see two additional reports coming to the Board this month, one presenting the Authority's annual business plan and the other, to be taken in private for personnel reasons, proposals for the

new organisational design. The Authority's staff continue to respond flexibly and professionally to the current circumstances and I am hugely grateful to them for that.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to discuss and note the information contained within the report.