

Meeting	Authority Meeting
Date	30 April 2020
Location	Tele-conference
Title of Paper	SPA Interim Chief Executive's Report
Presented By	Lynn Brown, Interim Chief Executive
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached:	NO

PURPOSE

To update Authority Members on activities carried out by the Interim Chief Executive and to offer comment on significant areas of development in relation to COVID-19.

Members are recommended to consider this report and to raise any matters for clarification or further detail with the Interim CE.

1. Background

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an update on key SPA COVID-19 activity which is not already covered elsewhere on the agenda.

2. Business Continuity Planning

- 2.1 In early March 2020 we undertook a business continuity exercise focused on a pandemic. This raised questions such as what would be the impact on the workforce of the closure nationally of schools. This meant that with the first announcement from the Scottish Government, on social distancing and self-isolation, we were able to move quickly to ensure all staff were able to work from home. My guidance to staff was that I wanted work to be a source of stability and not anxiety during these unprecedented times. I have quoted on a number of occasions the following statement which I had seen

"You are not working from home. You are at home during an unprecedented crisis, trying to work."

- 2.2 In spite of all the challenges of remote working staff have responded positively with 100% attendance which has enabled us to focus on priorities including advancing the public interest consideration in the policing response to COVID-19.

3. Engagement

- 3.1 The SPA continues to adhere to public health restrictions which have meant we have had to adapt how we conduct our business. This has presented some practical challenges for us. The Authority is not unique in this, similar challenges have been experienced by other institutions, including the Scottish Parliament.
- 3.2 As a result, those who usually attend or tune into our Authority meetings have not been able to watch our oversight for themselves due to business being conducted by teleconferences. With this in mind, we have increased the frequency of written updates to our stakeholders and for the public on our website. This includes regular updates to key stakeholders including the Scottish Parliament, COSLA and Local Authorities about how the SPA is exercising its oversight of policing during this challenging period.

- 3.3 We have been able to substitute our usual video stream of Authority meetings with audio recordings of the telephone conferences. The full proceedings of public sessions are posted on our website. By our next meeting in May we hope to have in place a video conferencing solution which will allow us to stream the session live so that members of the public and interested parties can continue to see and hear the Authority's ongoing scrutiny and support for policing in Scotland.

4. Justice Board

- 4.1 The Interim Chief Executive and the Director of Communications and Relationships have respectively been participating weekly in meetings of the Justice Board and the Justice Board Sub Group on COVID-19. This has provided opportunities to complement on behalf of SPA corporate and Forensics Services the operational contributions of Police Scotland in system-wide consideration of emerging issues and risks, such as the availability of PPE, key worker childcare, testing, inter-agency collaboration and planning, linkage with local authority services and third sector, and the interests of victims and witnesses.

5. Board Members Weekly COVID-19 Update

- 5.1 There is a clear role for the SPA, during the COVID-19 pandemic period, to focus on its statutory role by applying the appropriate oversight, at the right time on the right things. The Board also has an obligation to ensure it is acting in the public interest at all times and this is particularly relevant during a period when the policing powers are strengthened. To ensure the appropriate oversight is in place the existing governance routes will be maintained as far as is practical, given the current restrictions, and with as little additional burden on policing as possible. This however will be based on emerging requirements.
- 5.2 SPA Board Members are meeting weekly to receive updates on COVID-19 this, however, does not replace the scrutiny and oversight which continues to be undertaken. The Board have agreed the strategic outcomes and their scrutiny priorities for this period of uncertainty and have laid out the timeline for the

governance of policing and Forensic Services over the coming months. The Board will also continue to explore additional ways to test public opinion through the work of the Policing Performance Committee.

- 5.3 The strategic outcomes and timeline of governance can be found on the SPA website.

<http://www.spa.police.uk/performancepages/616673/>

6. Oversight of Police Scotland's response to COVID-19

- 6.1 Once the current situation is over SPA will want to take stock of how it handled the crisis and how it maintained its focus on the scrutiny and oversight of Police Scotland's response to the crisis. It is also expected that there will be a focus on SPA from external bodies, who will be reviewing how that scrutiny and oversight was carried out or strengthened during the period of the outbreak.
- 6.2 To prepare for this, SPA officers are working to gather evidence and an archive has been set up to put this in order. This will provide the basis for a narrative on some of the key issues arising and a starting point for lessons to be learned and improvements made. It is important in the meantime, however, that the flow of information is managed appropriately as the SPA Board and officers work remotely in circumstances that are less than ideal.

7. COVID-19 and Policing – Public Opinion Survey

- 7.1 The Authority has been keen to move quickly in terms of putting in place measures to help gauge the level of public trust and confidence in policing in Scotland, and monitor any changes in the short to medium-term. The Authority has commissioned an external, independent supplier to conduct a public opinion survey on its behalf, with fieldwork commencing w/c Monday 27 April 2020, and consisting of three fortnightly sweeps of 1,500 people.
- 7.2 The survey will consist of 10 initial questions that have been designed to enable comparisons to be made with police confidence questions asked in the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey, as well as questions asked in a recent YouGov/CREST survey in early April for

Great Britain as a whole. The overall sample size of 4,500 people will be sufficient to undertake disaggregated analysis of the data at the end of the run. Additional space exists for 5 additional questions to be added to sweeps 2 and 3 and the intention is for the Authority to develop these collaboratively with the Independent Advisory Group in the coming fortnight.

8. Collective Agreement

8.1 SPA officials worked in partnership with Police Scotland and trade unions to establish a collective agreement to ensure SPA/Police Scotland are able to maintain public safety, whilst appropriately supporting staff health and wellbeing, in response to COVID-19. This collective agreement provides the ability to temporarily increase the agility and flexibility in temporarily deploying police staff as a direct response to challenges associated with the COVID-19 response in protection of critical service. The key underlying principles of this agreement are:

- increased organisational agility and flexibility
- the health and wellbeing of staff
- the appropriate provision of reward/compensation for work undertaken

9. Pension Implications

9.1 SPA officials are engaging with the Scottish Government, Scottish Public Pensions Agency, Police Scotland and staff associations to support preparation for the potential need for officers to remain beyond their retirement date, or return from retirement in direct response to the challenges associated with the response to COVID-19. Whilst the actual current/future business need for this is not fully certain there has been a requirement to carry out such engagement (as has also been the case in England and Wales) in advance due to the need for changes to tax and pension rules to avoid detriment to officers involved if this option was progressed.

10. Working from home

- 10.1 On Thursday 12 March 2020 SPA Information Management staff enacted the pre-planning stage of their business continuity plan in the event that staff may not be able to return to the office due to COVID-19.
- 10.2 On Tuesday 17 March 2020 when the decision was made that staff would revert to home working for an unspecified time as a result of the pre-planning exercise there were no serious issues encountered and the transition to homeworking was successful.

11. Video Conferencing

- 11.1 Early on in the period of 'lockdown' it was identified that the current group communication capabilities available to SPA were not suitable. The immediate problems were remedied quickly by ICT and SPA were provided with a better quality conference call facility for Board/Committee meetings and additional lines/capacity for staff members. However, it was acknowledged, going forward, that the Board and Senior Management would require Video Conferencing facilities.
- 11.2 Police Scotland were already looking at a product for video conferencing called Microsoft Teams (the successor for Skype which we have internally) and ICT began liaising with Microsoft in order to deliver an interim solution of Teams that would meet the current needs. As with all products, testing had to be undertaken to ensure that Teams worked in the desired manner on the network. This testing has now concluded and from 22 April 2020 ICT will begin the process to roll out Microsoft Teams to Board Members and key staff for testing/training before moving to 'go live' as soon as is practicably possible.
- 11.3 Meetings can then be recorded and uploaded to the SPA public website.

12. Legal Documentation

- 12.1 The Information Management Team have sourced licences for our Legal Department for a product called Egress. This allows them to

send emails securely to webmail addresses, where they would previously have used surface mail. In turn it allows the recipients to send us 25 secure emails a month free of charge, so an ideal way for us to automate and manage our secure communications going forward.

- 12.2 It is currently being considered for delivering training to Forensics staff at home, without IT kit, via power point. It will then be considered for custody visiting when visits resume.

13. SPA Board and Corporate Daily Note

13.1 The daily note for SPA Board and corporate staff highlights any media and social media stories which impact positively or negatively on the state of policing in Scotland, as well as political events relevant to policing such as Topical Questions, First Minister Questions or legislation changes. The note includes stories about policing outwith Scotland which may be of interest and highlight any appropriate internal messaging which may have been issued by either SPA or Police Scotland.

13.2 For the duration of Covid-19, many of the stories captured relate to the pandemic and how police are applying the emergency powers in all areas of the UK. We are also capturing daily statistics which may be of interest.

13.3 A separate version of the Daily Note is provided to the Independent Advisory Group reviewing Police Scotland's use of the emergency coronavirus powers which removes any internal messaging because the group can't access our internal systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to discuss the content of this report.