

Meeting	Forensic Services Committee
Date	3 February 2021
Location	MS Teams
Title of Paper	Forensic Services Director's Report
Presented By	Tom Nelson, Director Forensic Services
Recommendation to Members	For noting
Appendix Attached	

PURPOSE

To update members on the recent key activities across Forensic Services

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report is to update members on activities across Forensic Services during the past few months.

2. UPDATES

COVID-19 pandemic

- 2.1 I have continued to chair regular Forensic Services Gold meetings to manage the Forensic Services response during the current pandemic. The health, wellbeing, and welfare of Forensic Services staff are at the heart of all our decision making. I have provided all staff with a regular weekly update throughout the pandemic and more often as needed.
- 2.2 The safe working environments Forensic Services created last year, coupled with the blended arrangements with staff either at home and or in the office as appropriate, have proved resilient to changes in the Scottish Government's regulations throughout the pandemic – these working arrangements are kept under regular review. I am grateful for the support of the trade unions representatives on the Gold group as well as the support provided by our Police Scotland colleagues and we continue to work closely with them as a member of the SCD Operation Talla group.
- 2.3 Derek Scrimger is leading an important piece of work for Forensic Services on what future planning may look like in the "New Normal", reviewing our working during the pandemic, considering what the Forensic Services response and what we can learn and how we improve for the future. This links across with a similar piece of work being carried out by Police Scotland.

Senior Management Team

- 2.4 This month members of the Forensic Services Senior Management Team have taken up new roles with Helen Haworth joining to take over as the Temporary Head of Biology. Derek Scrimger has moved to over as Temporary Head of Function for Scene Examination; Vicki Morton as Head of Function for Physical Sciences; and Gary Holcroft is leading an important project for Forensic Services.

- 2.5 These moves were announced to all staff in December to allow for a smooth transition and this will refresh and strengthen the Senior Management Team.

Managing workload

- 2.6 I, and members of the Senior Management Team, have weekly meetings with the COPFS and Police Scotland to discuss the changing workloads and priorities during the pandemic. The changes in the courts during the most recent lockdown period, announced by the Lord President, are expected to reduce the overall number of criminal trials taking place by up to 75%. The meetings involve us working with Police Scotland and COPFS going through their priorities and look forward to see how the changes in the court rollout programme may impact on Forensic Services. This allows us to prioritise what we are focusing on in the laboratories and will allow us to be in a better place when we get to the new work schedule.

Forensic 2026 Strategy update

- 2.7 While the committee will receive an extensive update on the Forensic 2026 Strategy, we are now looking to carry out a full review of the current strategy for the future. We are being supported in this by Police Scotland's Strategy, Insight, and Innovation team and will be engaging with internal and external partners, stakeholders, and experts – including members of the Forensic Services Committee and the Scottish Police Authority as part of this consultation.

MyCareer

- 2.8 Forensic Services is taking part, along with two divisions from Police Scotland, in the Proof of Concept pilot in a new staff appraisal system MyCareer. The first part of MyCareer required staff to take part in online training using Moodle. In spite of the current challenging times, all managers in Forensic Services and more than 90% of staff have now completed this extensive training. MyCareer has been created to recognise that employees have different, individual needs and support for their continuous development using a reflective performance appraisal tool.

Accreditation update

- 2.9 UKAS has now decided to postpone all scene of crime assessments until at least the end of April 2021. Forensic Services will continue to work with UKAS to reschedule this work.
- 2.10 UKAS has also agreed that the outstanding surveillance assessments in DNA in Edinburgh and Firearms at the SCC will be carried out remotely - using MS Teams. This will ensure that Forensic Services can maintain accreditation in these areas.

Operational update

- 2.11 On 12 January 2021, specialist search officers and forensic experts along with SPA Forensic Services (Lead Forensic Scientist Major Crime and Scene Examination staff) discovered human remains in a remote area of ground close to a farm near the A82 at Bridge of Orchy. This work is in support of the enquiry led by Police Scotland's Major Investigation Team (MIT).
- 2.12 The next day a DNA sample was sent to the SPA Forensic Services Laboratory in Edinburgh. Just 24 hours after the sample had been taken, Forensic Scientists were able to confirm the identity of the deceased as Anthony Parson, from Tillicoultry, who had been reported missing in 2017.
- 2.13 The DNA profile was compared with one previously loaded on to the Missing Persons DNA Database (MPDD) by the SPA Forensic Services Biology Volume Crime Unit (VCU) at the time Mr Parson's had been reported missing. Enquiries are still ongoing and SPA Forensic Services continue to support the investigation. Proceedings are now live under the Contempt of Court Act 1981.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this paper.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this paper.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no reputational implications associated with this paper.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no social implications associated with this paper.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

8.1 There are no community implications associated with this paper.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equality implications associated with this paper.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this paper.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

Note the information contained within this report.