

Meeting	Authority Meeting
Date	24 February 2021
Location	Video-conference
Title of Paper	SPA Chair's Report
Presented By	Martyn Evans
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached:	No

Purpose

To update Authority Members on activities carried out by the Chair since taking post on 1 February 2021.

Draft Budget announcement

The Scottish Government announced its draft budget on 28 January 2021. This has been very much welcomed by the Authority and Police Scotland. The draft budget includes an additional £60 million in revenue funding for the Authority. This will address the structural deficit. The draft budget also commits to maintaining capital funding at existing levels along with an additional £0.5m for specialist equipment for officers.

While the Authority and Police Scotland have been clear that there is a need for additional capital and reform funding to accelerate transformation in policing, we also acknowledge the challenges on public finance.

Significant engagement and work went into informing the Scottish Government's draft budget. I am grateful to Police Scotland and our staff for their excellent work in presenting clear and persuasive evidence which allows us to look forward to setting a balanced budget for 2021/22 for the first time in six years.

Oversight of policing COVID-19

The policing of the coronavirus pandemic continues to be an area of significant focus for Authority. We will consider the latest report from the Independent Advisory Group chaired by John Scott QC later in the agenda.

As we look forward to March and the first anniversary since restrictions were introduced, I can confirm that a further, fourth wave of independent public polling has been commissioned to understand public attitudes across Scotland to the policing approach. I have also spoke with the Chief Executive and agreed that there will be a report to our meeting in May taking a holistic view of the Authority's oversight of policing during the pandemic.

In addition to this, and in discussion with Police Scotland and John Scott QC, we have agreed that a year on from the introduction of the restrictions marks an appropriate point to commission a short independent review of the Independent Advisory Group's work reviewing Police Scotland's use of the new police powers. We expect the report to also be available for consideration at the May Authority meeting.

Early Engagement

Since taking up post on 1 February 2021, I have had a series of early engagement meetings with the Chief Constable and his leadership team, Tom Nelson, Director of Forensic Services, HMICS Gill Imery, PIRC Michelle McLeod and officials at Police Division. I have meetings scheduled in the weeks ahead with the Cabinet Secretary, COSLA, the British Transport Authority and the staff associations. I am grateful to all those I have met so far and for the patience of others as I get meetings arranged.

Parliamentary Engagement

My first few weeks in post have seen a series of engagements with Parliament on a range of issues. On 11 February, alongside David Crichton and our Accountable Officer and Chief Executive Lynn Brown, I attended to give evidence to the Public Audit and Post Legislative Scrutiny Committee on Audit Scotland's s.22 report on the Authority's 2019/2020 accounts¹.

There has also been a range of correspondence with the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing (JSCOP) on the following issues:

- 5 February 2021 - Submission on Dame Elish Angiolini's Independent Review of Complaints Handling ²
- 5 February 2021 - Response on Police Scotland's use of remotely piloted aircraft systems³
- 9 February 2021 - Response on proposed use of live facial recognition technology⁴
- 10 February 2021 - Response on HMICS Thematic Inspection of Police Scotland Training and Development - Phase 1⁵
- 11 February 2021 - Response on policing COP26 and re-scheduled Euro 2020 Championships⁶
- 11 February 2021 - Response on secondment of officer to Police Scotland⁷

¹ <https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=13125&mode=pdf>

² <https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/ktaplbtq/sub-20210205-spa-submission-to-jscop-re-dame-elish-review.pdf>

³ <https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/3mwfhxif/let-20210205-co-008-2021-spa-response-to-jscop-re-drones-follow-up-docx.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/filjlczh/let-20210209-co-105-2020-spa-response-to-jscop-re-facial-recognition-docx.pdf>

⁵ https://www.parliament.scot/S5_JusticeSubCommitteeOnPolicing/General%20Documents/SPA_response_-_HMICS_Report_on_Training_and_Development.pdf

⁶ <https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/sjsdt0dp/let-20210211-co-103-2020-spa-response-to-jscop-re-cop26-and-euros-docx.pdf>

⁷ https://www.parliament.scot/S5_JusticeSubCommitteeOnPolicing/Inquiries/SPA_-_secondment_of_Vietnamese_officers.pdf

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The Authority has also responded to a request by the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing to inform its legacy report for session 5. This will be published alongside the legacy report in due course.

I have also been invited to appear before the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing on 15 March 2021. I will be accompanied by the Chief Executive at that session.

Authority membership

The Scottish Government is expected to make an announcement in the coming week appointing six new members to the Authority. We expect those members to join us in a phased approach from 1 March 2021 and look forward to welcoming them in due course.

A wider review of committee and external group membership will take place once we have more of the new members in post. In the meantime, I am grateful to Michelle Miller who will Chair the Policing Performance Committee on 9 March 2021. Barry Sillers, Deputy Chief Executive (Strategy and Performance) is also now representing the Authority on the Independent Advisory Group reviewing Police Scotland's use of new temporary police powers to tackle coronavirus.

Interim Chair

This is my first report since taking post as Chair of the Scottish Police Authority on 1 February 2021. I want to put on record my thanks to my predecessor, David Crichton who has played a fundamental role as Interim Chair of the Authority since December 2019 and prior to that as Vice Chair. I know I speak for the whole Board in saying his approach and focus saw significant progress made both within the Authority in strengthening further its governance arrangements but also externally in building ever stronger relations with our key stakeholders and partners. I am personally grateful for the generous time, support and guidance he gave me as the incoming Chair.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to discuss and note the content of this report.