



Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee

6 February 2025

Minutes of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee held on Wednesday
20 November 2024 at 10am via Webex

Committee Members present:	Mary Pitcaithly Paul Edie Angela Leitch Grant Macrae
Committee Member apologies:	Katharina Kasper
In attendance:	<u>Scottish Police Authority</u> Lynn Brown, Chief Executive Officer John McNellis, Head of Finance, Audit and Risk (Items 1 – 4.2) Rachael Nicolson, Strategy Research Performance Policy Change Officer (Item 4.3) Karen Vallance, Governance Support Officer <u>Forensic Services</u> Fiona Douglas, Director (Item 3.1 – 5) Sam Curran, Head of Function (Items 3.1-4.2) Craig Donnachie, Head of Quality and Assurance <u>Police Scotland</u> Deputy Chief Constable Bex Smith Assistant Chief Constable Stuart Houston Assistant Chief Constable Catriona Paton Alastair Corfield, Head of Best Value Tom McMahon, Director of Strategy and Analysis

	<p>Sara MacKenzie, Enterprise Risk Manager Donna Adam, Audit Manager- Transformation Kerry Harvey, Data Protection Officer</p> <p><u>Grant Thornton</u> Hannah McKellor, Senior Manager</p> <p><u>BDO</u> Claire Robertson, Risk and Advisory Services Director</p> <p><u>HMICS</u> Alan Wright</p>
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1. STANDING ITEMS

1.1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Committee Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees. Members noted apologies from Katharina Kasper.

1.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members noted no declarations of interest.

1.3 MINUTE OF MEETING HELD ON 15 AUGUST 2024 FOR APPROVAL

Members approved the Minute of the 15 August 2024 meeting.

1.4 ACTION LOG AND MATTERS ARISING

Members noted the action log.

1.5 DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE (ITEMS 6-9)

Members agreed that, in accordance with paragraph 20 of the SPA Standing Orders, the Committee would consider items 6-9 in private for the reasons set out on the agenda.

2. AUDIT AND IMPROVEMENT

2.1 INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

Members considered the report which provided an update on internal audit progress and Q1 follow up results. Claire Robertson (CRobertson) highlighted a number of key points detailed within the report.

Members were assured there had been an improvement in response times from Forensic Services due to reprioritising and movement of resource allocation.

Members noted the report.

2.2 POLICE SCOTLAND AUDIT AND IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATION TRACKER Q2

Members considered the report which provided an update of current open recommendations from all audit and improvement activity. ACC Stuart Houston (ACCHouston) highlighted a number of key points detailed within the report, focussing on the reduction of new recommendations and recommendations closed.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- The Committee Chair welcomed the improvement in the number of extensions being requested.
- Members sought information on any risks from not progressing vetting recommendations. ACCHouston assured the Committee that a significant amount of work in vetting had been undertaken to ensure alignment with other police vetting practices, however the biggest risk was around quality assurance. Work continues to address this, and any outliers have been removed and reported to HMICS. Whilst there has been an increase in vetting demand, resource has been increased to meet the requirement.
- Members sought comment on whether Police Scotland feel there is enough focus on adhering to audit recommendations throughout the organisation. Members were told a delay in one can cause unintended consequences for another area. High risk recommendations are not confined to one area, but regular requests are provided to meet milestones. Members requested further assurance that staff are actively working to address ongoing recommendations. ACCHouston agreed for reporting structures to be included in a future report.
- Members questioned how older recommendations will be responded in light of the revised model of policing, and heard each recommendation is linked to the business plan to aid prioritisation.

Members noted the report and agreed the following action:

20241120-AUD-001: Reporting process and structures regarding tracking recommendations to be included in future report.

2.3 SPA AUDIT AND IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS UPDATE

Members considered the report which provided an update on progress against the SPA Corporate Strategy for 2024/25, and open recommendations from all SPA corporate audit and inspection activity. John McNellis (JMcNellis) highlighted a number of key points detailed within the report, specifically drawing attention to the appendix on actions where there is disagreement.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Members sought assurance on the resources required for electronic data retention and heard SPA were trying to agree an alternative interpretation for the finding which would help with achieving an appropriate response.
- Members questioned why ICT recommendations are not being advanced when ICT is a high risk area for the organisation. DCC Bex Smith assured the Committee that demand planning is within the business plan and the RDU are looking at short term solutions, with long term planning at an early stage. Members acknowledged that an ideal solution would take time, but they assurance was needed that resource is being allocated against demand to get an intermediary position.
- The Committee Chair welcomed the process to reach a resolution for recommendations but encouraged Police Scotland and BDO to exhaust all opportunities to resolve outstanding issues.

Members noted the report.

3. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTING

3.1 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

Members considered the audit report on Forensics Services Performance Management. CRobertson highlighted a number of key points detailed within the report.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Members were informed that demand was considered throughout all aspects.
- Members were assured that whilst a discrepancy in performance reporting had been identified, there was no concern regarding the information presented to the Forensic Services Committee or of wide-spread inaccurate reporting.
- Members were informed of the joint work between Forensic Services and Police Scotland DPU regarding drug driving to generate a partnership approach to service demand.

Members considered the audit report on COS. CRobertson highlighted a number of key points detailed within the report.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Members sought further explanation of the associated benefits and heard they will be reported within recommendation progress. Members heard Internal Audit are already looking at the overall change portfolio and that report will come to the Committee in February 2025.

Members considered the audit report on Risk Management. CRobertson highlighted a number of key points detailed within the report.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- The Committee Chair confirmed the Committee were keen to minimise the number of risks outside appetite and tolerance. CRobertson advised that the report provided scrutiny of all risk register controls, but BDO would look to provide more assurance on appetite and tolerance in future reports.
- Sara MacKenzie advised that the updated risk identification form had been helpful. She emphasised that the Committee only see strategic risks but there are multiple registers and over 500 risks have been closed following the new system.
- Members noted the high number of risks and asked consideration be given to see if some can be consolidated. Members advised that how risk is articulate in the first instance is important in finding mitigating measures.

Members considered the audit report on EqHRIA. CRobertson highlighted a number of key points detailed within the report.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- The Committee welcomed the report, noting it help improved decision making.
- ACC Catriona Paton (ACCPaton) advised the Committee that the report was the final of a number of reports on how EDI is embedded. ACCPaton confirmed all recommendations have been accepted and the intention was for EqHRIA to become an embedded behaviour although improved governance was required.
- Members sought further information on timescales and heard they were being addressed as a priority, but some timescales were around two years to allow the opportunity for impacts to be assessed.
- The Committee asked that consideration be given to prioritising the roll out of assessment training.

Members noted the report.

3.2 EXTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

Hannah McKellor advised that future auditing work would commence in due course. She confirmed there was no public sector activity to report.

JMcNellis advised the Annual Report and Accounts would be laid in parliament on 26 November 2024, with a shorter more accessible version available.

Members noted the update.

4. ASSURANCE REPORTING

4.1 POLICE SCOTLAND BEST VALUE UPDATE

Members considered the report which provided an update on best value progress in Police Scotland. Alasdair Corfield (ACorfield) highlighted a number of key points detailed within the report.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Members heard Tom McMahon was the Police Scotland Executive Lead for Best Value and he assured the Committee that engagement with HMICS was a priority as well as partnership and alignment with the professionalism and assurance portfolio.
- Members were assured that Best Value will be considered in responding to all new recommendations.
- The Committee Chair highlighted the area was a standing item as the Committee have concern on progress, and emphasised one of the Committees target outcomes is to ensure there are adequate resources to respond to the Best Value audit.
- Angela Leitch confirmed she was meeting with Best Value colleagues to provide some non-executive support.
- The Committee were informed that the self-assessment analysis was still being undertaken but findings would be reported to Police Scotland's Senior Leadership Board. However, it had been identified that vision and leadership came out as the top theme whereas working with communities was a weaker area.
- The Committee heard that the Terms of Reference for the audit were due but had not yet been agreed. Lynn Brown (LBrown) advised that the audit was a standing item for meetings between HMICS and the SPA Chair.
- The Committee agreed they were still concerned by the lack of assurances on readiness and action plans and requested an update on the outcomes of the internal sessions in advance of the next meeting.

Members noted the report and agreed the following action:

20241120-AUD-002: Update on outcomes of internal sessions by correspondence in advance of the next meeting.

4.2 SPA AND FORENSIC SERVICES BEST VALUE UPDATE

Members considered the report which provided an update on best value progress across SPA Forensics and SPA Corporate. JMcNellis and SCurran highlighted a number of key points detailed within the report regarding SPA and Forensic Service respectively.

No questions were raised.

Members noted the report.

4.3 PEEL PRACTICE COMPENDIUM

Members considered the report which provided an update on work conducted by SPA Corporate Staff to compile a UK Compendium of recognised innovative, highly effective or efficient practice and policy in Operational Policing. Rachael Nicolson highlighted a number of key points detailed within the report.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Members heard it had been shared with Police Scotland and feedback was positive.
- LBrown commented that it would be useful for Best Value work, and it would continually be kept updated.

Members noted the report.

4.4 ICO AUDIT OF POLICE SCOTLAND

Members considered the report which provided an update following ICOs final review of the consensual audit undertaken by ICO in respect of Police Scotland's processing of personal data. Kerry Harvey highlighted a number of key points detailed within the report.

In discussion the following matters were raised:

- Members heard the Standard Operating Procedures had been redrafted and are due to go through mandatory consultation processes once interdependencies on security procedures have been addressed.
- Members were assured ICO are comfortable with the timescales and expectations have been discussed.
- Members were informed the outstanding recommendation is not serious enough to bring enforcement action.

Members noted the report.

5. AUDIT, RISK AND ASSURANCE COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

5.1 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

Members were presented with the work plan which proposed Committee items for the next 12 months.

Members noted the plan.

The remaining items were taken in private.

