

**FORENSIC SERVICES COMMITTEE  
26 JULY 2021**

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**Minute of the Scottish Police Authority Forensic Services  
Committee held by MS Teams on Monday 26 July 2021.**

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Authority Members Present: Tom Halpin (Chair)  
Paul Edie  
Jane Ryder  
Caroline Stuart  
Martyn Evans  
Katharina Kasper

In attendance: Scottish Police Authority (SPA)  
Tom Nelson, Director of Forensic Services  
Gary Holcroft, Scientific Head of Function  
Fiona Douglas, Scientific Head of Function  
Craig Donnachie, Head of Quality  
Vicki Morton, Scientific Head of Function  
Helen Haworth, Scientific Head of Function  
Jennifer Muir, Head of Strategy and Business Performance  
Kevin O'Hare, Communications and Engagement  
Specialist

Colette Craig, Governance Support Officer  
John McNellis, Head of Finance Audit and Risk  
Graham Stickle, Audit and Risk Lead  
Eleanor Gaw, Governance and External Relations Lead

Police Scotland (PS)  
D/Chief Superintendent Laura McLuckie  
T/Chief Superintendent Stevie Dolan

COPFS  
Kenny Donnelly

Scottish Biometrics Commissioner  
Brian Plastow

### **1.1 Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting of the SPA Forensics Services Committee. The Chair welcomed John McNellis Head of Finance, Audit and Risk, SPA. Iain Harkness and Alastair Patience, Operations Manager from SPA Forensics and DCS Laura McLuckie T/CS Stevie Dolan from Police Scotland. The Chair also welcomed Dr Brian Plastow, Scottish Biometrics Commissioner.

Apologies were noted from CDIO Andrew Hendry and ACC Judi Heaton from Police Scotland.

### **1.2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **1.3 Forensics Services Committee minute of meeting held 19 April 2021 for approval**

Members agreed the Minute from the Forensics Services Committee on 19 April 2021 was an accurate record of the meeting.

### **1.4 Action Log and Matters Arising**

Members reviewed the action log and noted and agreed the written updates provided.

There were no matters arising.

### **1.5 Decision on taking business in private (items 11 - 18)**

Members agreed, in accordance with paragraph 20 of the SPA Standing Orders, to consider items 11 – 18 on the agenda in private for the reasons set out in the agenda.

## **2. Forensic Services Director's Report – Tom Nelson**

Members considered the paper which had been submitted to update the Committee on the recent key activities across Forensic Services. In addition to the submitted report the following points were raised and discussed;

Members were advised that following confirmation that Scottish Government would be investing £6m into the new Toxicology Service, this would be operational from the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022 and the project will be delivered by Gary Holcroft.

TNelson paid tribute to Carina Joannidis, for being awarded the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining Materials World Medal for Money Talks - the best feature published during the year in the Institute's Materials World magazine. The award was for her contribution to a collaborative project about examination of the new polymer banknotes.

TNelson referred to MyCareer, the new appraisal system underpinned by the Competency & Values Framework and advised members that it completes its Proof of Concept pilot on 31 August 2021. A report will return to the committee on the outcome of that.

The Chair formally congratulated Carina Joannidis for her work on behalf of the committee and noted the further excellence being delivered by the Forensic Services.

**Members noted the report.**

**3. Forensic Services Performance Report – Q1 – Tom Nelson**

Members considered the Forensic Services Performance Report, Q1 2021/222. TNelson highlighted key areas within the report and in addition to the report the following points were raised and noted;

Members sought clarity on where the newly established People, ICT and Change and Improvement Board would report into. TNelson advised that the boards currently report into the Forensic Services Planning and Performance Board, however, it would be proposed that they would report into the Forensics Services Committee along with other SPA Committees when required.

Members referred to the Scene Examination Unit and sought clarity on whether there were targets in place. TNelson advised that throughout Scotland there was a national target of 90%, however, separate reporting is carried out for the North, East and West due the West having higher complex crimes in terms of seriousness and frequency. Members were further advised that the increase of scenes attended for this quarter was a more normal figure and that the business is now returning to pre Covid figures.

D/Chief Superintendent Laura McLuckie referred to laboratory capacity and requested that toxicology figures were separated to provide a more accurate picture in order to monitor and address issues around that area of business.

Members noted the importance of demand response being consistent within each area and sought assurance that every mitigation or action was being taken to address this.

Members sought clarity on why there was such a variance around Evidence Recovery Rates between the East, North and West. TNelson advised he would ask Derek Scrimger to report back to the committee on that.

Finally members sought clarity around what stage accreditation was at for Crime Scene Examination. TNelson advised that following a visit earlier in the year a number of actions were being taken forward along with UKAS. At the management meeting scheduled for August 2021 an update will be provided on the next stages, however, there were no fundamental issues in preventing achieving that accreditation and the team continue to work towards that.

**Members noted the report and agreed the following actions.**

**20210726-FS-001:** Future performance reports to separate Toxicology data from Laboratory Capacity figures.

**20210726-FS-002:** Provide an update to the committee on the variance within Evidence Recovery Rates between the East, North and West.

**4. COP26 - Forensic Services Preparedness – Vicki Morton**

Members considered the paper which had been submitted to provide the committee with an update on the engagement to date and potential Forensic Services resource requirements to support the COP26 climate change summit.

The Chair highlighted key issues in relation to full cost recovery being applied in terms of the day to day business of the Forensics Services budget along with the wellbeing and welfare of staff in terms of early notification around annual leave restrictions. The Chair noted that this was all being further scrutinised by the COP26 Oversight Group.

**Members noted the report.**

**5. Demonstrating Value of Forensic Services Progress Update–  
Fiona Douglas**

Members considered the report which had been submitted to provide the committee with an update on demonstrating the work to assess the value

of forensic science. During discussion and in addition to the report the following points were raised and noted;

Members welcomed and commended the progress made and welcomed the more holistic and comprehensive approach.

The Chair asked that the newer committee members were provided with an update on work that was ongoing around Demonstrating Value due to it being a strategic and complex area.

**Members noted the report and agreed the following action.**

**20210726-FS-003:** Provide the newer committee members with an update on work that was ongoing around Demonstrating Value.

## **6. Workforce Planning – Progress Update – Fiona Douglas**

The committee were provided with an update on the development of a Forensic Services Strategic Workforce Plan. In addition to the submitted report the following points were raised and discussed;

- Members sought clarity on how realistic the timeframe was in bringing a draft workforce plan to the October Committee. FDouglas agreed the timeline was ambitious however, could be achieved due to the progress around capacity forecasting and workforce analysis.
- Members sought clarity on whether Police Scotland's Demand and Productivity Unit would be assisting with the demand forecasting. FDouglas advised that unfortunately they have been unable to support the work to date, however, further discussion would take place with DCSLMcLuckie and team around how work can take place within Police Scotland to assess the data that had been gathered in order to bring it together with any known data from a policing perspective and how that would impact on Forensic Services.

**Members noted the report and agreed the following action:**

**20210726-FS-004:** Confirm whether or not the Draft Workforce Plan can be delivered to the October Committee following discussions with partners who have a role in undertaking demand forecasting.

## **7. Forensic Services 2026**

### **7.1 Forensic Services 2026 Update – Fiona Douglas**

Members considered the report which provided a progress update on The Forensic Services 2026 Programme. During Discussion and in addition to the written paper the following points were discussed;

- Members sought clarity on whether further personnel requirements were needed to deliver phase 2, despite the report advising that the programme was already well into phase 2. FDouglas advised members that phase 2 was around transitioning to the new operating model and the projects around that were well progressed, however, there were some resource challenges in terms of project management support which carried some risks. It is hoped that the impact of those risks would be clarified over the next 2 weeks.
- The Chair referred to the ongoing transformational change and the impact for key partners, and sought clarity that Police Scotland were fully involved in the transformational programme. FDouglas advised that there had been a number of engagements with Police Scotland and more recently to take the ACC's through the proposed new operating model and the benefits that would bring to Police Scotland. In addition, local area commanders would be briefed in more detail around the proposed changes and the benefits. DCSLMcLuckie advised that Police Scotland were encouraged by the direction of travel and advised that a good working relationship was in place and as the model develops, she and FDouglas are in regular contact with the relevant staff being kept up to date.

### **Members noted the report**

### **7.2 Forensics 2026 Strategy Refresh – Tom Nelson**

Members were provided with a report which detailed an overview of the draft Forensic Services Strategy seeking onward submission to the SPA Board for approval. In addition to the written paper the following points were discussed;

- Members commended the enormous amount of work that had been carried out, however, suggested some editing in terms of the style and length to ensure that the strategy is accessible and readable to the general public.
- Members referred to the measuring of progress and assessing

Performance and noted that there were no specifics noted. Members added the need for measurements for performance or further detail around how that would be achieved to be included within the Strategy as a public facing document despite that information being within the Business Case.

**Members noted the report and agreed the following action:**

**20210726-FS-005:** Consider some editing of the Strategy in terms of style and length to ensure it becomes accessible and readable to the general public. In addition ensure that how progress would be measured and how performance would be assessed was included as part of the strategy.

**7.2 Environmental Strategy – Jennifer Muir**

Members were provided with a report which provided an overview of Forensic Services activities that would support and engage with the Police Scotland Environmental Strategy that was approved in March 2021. In addition to the written paper the following points were discussed;

- Members welcomed the report and the comprehensive thinking that had gone into it and sought clarity on whether this would deliver “outstanding” environmental sustainability across the piece and asked for consideration to be given to some benchmarking. TNelson advised the need to identify what the targets should be. The Chair sought clarity on what staff involvement looked like. JMuir advised that a group had been established within the East with a lot of enthusiasm coming forward. There is also an intention to have the Green Leaders Network to drive forward their own initiatives, however, they would also be dovetailing into some of the work being led by Derek Scrimger around what the new normal would look like, addressing some creative solutions and looking to identify how smarter working could be supported.

**Members noted the report and agreed the following action:**

**20210726-FS-006:** Consider some benchmarking to assist in identifying what targets should be and measure against those targets.

**8. Update on HMICS Thematic Inspection of the Scottish Police Authority Forensic Services**

Members considered the paper which had been submitted to provide the Committee with an update on work to implement the improvements set out

in the HMICS Thematic Inspection of the Scottish Police Authority Forensic Services. During Discussion and in addition to the written paper the following points were discussed;

- Recommendation 15 in relation to the Lean Six Sigma Review is also a recommendation within the Crime Audit Inspection. This recommendation is out with the control of SPA Forensic Services and Police Scotland Gateway, therefore a proposal has been put to HMICS in order to have it closed from the report and maintained through the Crime Audit Inspection.
- Members noted concerns and sought clarity around the delay on closing many of the recommendations that don't require any major capital or resource. VMorton advised that there had been a lot of activity when the report was initially received, with many of the recommendations closed off at those early stages. However, as areas progressed into the 2026 Programme of Change and in order to make a fundamental and sustainable difference this brought forward much of the delays. Delays with the MoU and Demand Management was key to much of the work, however, reassured members that there was a vast amount of activity ongoing with continuous improvement within lots of the factors mentioned within the report.
- Members noted concerns around the delays in achieving a MoU. TNelson agreed and advised that timings around developing and delivering a Forensics Strategy along with a review of the senior management structure, along with being tied in with the 2026 programme, had slowed areas of work down. It would be hoped that much of the recommendations would be closed within a short space of time once the operating model had been through the appropriate committees.

The Committee Chair noted that this area was a high priority for the committee however, when dealing with the transformational change of forensic services in Scotland the detailed work around demand, workforce strategy and other areas would all lead towards delivering the service going forward and that the committee would continue to provide focus in this area.

### **Members noted the report.**

### **9. Drug Driving Update – Vicki Morton**

Members considered the paper which provided an update on the Drug Driving Toxicology Service. During Discussion and in addition to the written paper the following points were discussed;



- VMorton advised the committee that improvements have been identified within recent months which was a result of the staff. There is no further funding for outsourcing available at this time and there was recognition that this was a collaborative challenge which would require partnership solutions.
- The Committee Chair referred to the business case for establishing capability around drug driving was a starting point based on the figures within England and Wales, however, the demand level is higher than first anticipated, despite efforts being made around efficiencies within the laboratories, flexibilities within the workforce, operational responsiveness to the reality, outsourcing and prosecution, there was a need for a discussion between SPA Forensic Services, Police Scotland and COPFS to bring forward a joint paper to go to Scottish Government around the reality and learning being gain from applying the new legislation.

**Members noted the report and agreed the following action:**

**20210726-FS-007:** SPA Forensic Services, Police Scotland and COPFS to bring forward a joint paper to go to Scottish Government around the reality and learning being gain from applying the new Drug Driving legislation.

**10. Forensic Services Committee Workplan**

Members noted the Forensic Services Committee Workplan and agreed that the Strategic Workforce Plan should be added.

The Committee Chair paid tribute to Tom Nelson, who would be retiring from his role, making this his final attendance to the SPA Forensic Services Committee. The Committee Chair advised that TNelson had been an outstanding Director of Forensic Services and public servant, putting public interest and the needs of those who use the service to the forefront. In addition, TNelson carries a fine balance to ensure that the interests and welfare of his workforce were also a high priority. His influence in forensic services are not only in Scotland but he was well regarded for his role within forensic services within Northern Ireland along as being recognised across the United Kingdom and internationally, with his views being frequently sought from other likeminded scientific professionals. The Committee Chair advised that TNelson had brought together forensic science within Scotland from legacy force arrangements into a cohesive national asset, which is world leading.

The Committee Chair thanked TNelson on behalf of the committee for all of this work. TNelson thanked his team and staff for their work and

support towards him over the years and advised the committee had taken SPA Forensic Services to a different level of scrutiny, engagement and support and thanked the SPA, the committee and partner agencies for all of their support.

*The remaining items were taken in private.*

APPROVED