



Agenda Item 4

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Legal Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>11 March 2025</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Online</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>Committee Effectiveness</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>Vanessa Ewing-Blair, Head of Strategic Business Management</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	<b>No</b>

**PURPOSE**

This report provides the Legal Committee with the findings of a recent survey conducted with Board Members and stakeholders, seeking their feedback on the overall effectiveness of the committee.

The report is for Members consideration and seeks to inform overall evaluation of the committee’s effectiveness during 2024/25, and subsequent assurance report to the Audit Risk and Assurance Committee in May 2025.

The paper is presented in line with the Authority’s Corporate Governance Framework and committee Terms of Reference.

## 1. Background

1.1 The Scottish Police Authority is committed to continuous improvement in the discharge of its responsibilities and its oversight and support for policing in Scotland. The [Authority's Corporate Governance Framework](#) is subject to regular review with the most recent review reported to and approved by the Authority in November 2024. In addition, the Authority conducts an annual self-assessment of the effectiveness of Committees.

1.2 The Authority enhanced the 2024/25 committee effectiveness process by inviting key stakeholders to offer their assessment and views on the effectiveness of each of the Authority's committees. The stakeholders listed below were invited to complete a survey and offer comments. All stakeholders consulted have contributed to and/or attended a committee in the last year:

- Police Scotland
- Forensic Services
- PIRC
- COSLA
- Crown Office
- Scottish Government
- HMICS
- Biometrics Commissioner
- National Crime Agency
- Internal/External Audit
- SCPOSA
- ASPS
- SPF
- Unison
- Unite

1.3 To encourage open and frank responses, Members and stakeholders were invited to complete the survey anonymously.

1.4 To support accountability and transparency, the Authority is reporting the survey findings and holding all committee effectiveness discussions in public sessions of committee meetings.

## 2. Further detail in relation to the report

2.1 There are no specific requirements or direction on how public bodies should undertake effectiveness reviews. The Authority considers a range of relevant documents including '[On Board](#)' guidance, the Scottish Government [Audit and Assurance Committee Handbook](#) and the CIPFA [Good Governance Standard for Public Services](#).

2.2 The committee effectiveness survey for 2024/25 sought feedback in four key areas:

- Reporting to committees
- Committee priorities and progress

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- Members’ capability and overall operation of the committee
- Delivery against the Terms of Reference

2.3 All members of the Legal Committee completed the survey. Three responses were submitted by stakeholders, with one commenting on the Legal Committee.

**3. Members survey findings**

3.1 The responses to questions in the survey used the scale set out below. The analytical tables show how many Members gave a particular response to each question.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Answered
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3.2 **Reporting to committee** - There is a high level of agreement among Members regarding the overall quality, clarity, and content of committee papers.

3.3 One Member noted an improvement in the explanations on the progress of individual cases. The Member also noted that further lessons learned are needed on settlements and require input from divisions on actions being taken and the measurement of the overall impact.

The quality of committee papers allows Members to perform their roles effectively	1	4			
Overall, reports are clear and easy to understand, and suitable for a non-executive audience	2		3		
Papers make clear what the committee is being asked to do	3			2	
Equality, human rights or community impacts are increasingly reflected in reports to the committee	2	1	1	1	
Overall, the quality of committee papers is improving	5				

3.4 **Priorities and progress** - There is majority agreement among Members that the work of the Committee has a strong strategic focus, although there is a lack of certainty regarding organisational culture, tracking progress, and impact.

3.5 One Member did note that it is unclear how much action is being taken to address issues much earlier to avoid further claims or settlements.

The committee ensures visibility on matters of significant public interest	1	2	2
Work plans reflect key strategic priorities	4		1
The committee's work has reflected the focus on organisational culture	3		2
The committee's work has reflected issues around capacity and capability	2	3	
The committee has processes in place to allow members to track progress of ongoing work	1	3	1
Committees follow up on reports to seek evidence of implementation and impact	1	3	1
Decisions and actions are tracked and implemented in line with the timescale set out	1	3	1

3.6 **Members and overall operation** – All Members agreed that they are confident, agree positions, provide genuine challenge, seek assurances. The majority of Members agreed that they have the right balance of skills, knowledge and experience.

Members are confident in agreeing a position on specific issues and in decision making	4	1	
Members provide genuine challenge, as well as seek clarification and / or reassurance	5		
Committee members have the right balance of experience, knowledge and skill to fulfil the committee's role	3	1	1

3.7 **Governance Support and Remit** - Members all agree that the Committee receives appropriate advice on taking certain agenda items in private, and that minutes of meetings are of a high standard. The majority of Members agree that the Committee's remit is fit for purpose.

3.8 One Member noted that the Committee would benefit from more sitting legal expertise to be able to provide effective challenge.

The committee is advised and confident about when to consider items in private session	4		1
Minutes of meetings are accurate, clear and contain an appropriate level of detail	3	2	
The committee’s remit remains relevant, manageable and fit for purpose	3	1	1

3.9 **Terms of Reference** – Four out of five Members indicated that the Committee is fully discharging its responsibilities in line with its terms of reference.

3.10 Overall, the results for the Legal Committee are positive, with a few areas for improvement identified.

3.11 Area where consideration might be given for improvement include:

- A greater emphasis on equality, human rights, or community impacts in reports to the committee; and
- A greater focus on organisational culture in the work of the committee.

#### 4. Stakeholder Survey Findings

4.1 The responses to questions in the survey used the scale set out below. The analytical tables show how many stakeholders gave a particular response to each question.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Answered
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4.2 **Priorities and Workplan** – feedback from stakeholders reflected broad agreement with the statements below.

The Committee has priorities which are clear and understood.	1
The Committee workplan is clear, aligned to its priorities and considered regularly in public sessions.	1

**4.3 Reports to Committee** - feedback from stakeholders agreed that reports to the Committee were clear and circulated with enough time to consider.

We aim to circulate papers to Committee attendees a week in advance and publish on the Authority's website three days in advance. This is enough time to consider the papers provided.	1
Reports are clear and easy to understand.	1
It is clear from reports what the Committee is being asked to do.	1

**4.4 Meeting Management** – stakeholders agreed that the meetings were effectively managed.

The Committee Chair is effective in managing the meeting and allowing all participants to contribute.	1
The Committee Chair is effective in bringing matters to a decision or position.	1

**4.5 Overall effectiveness** – feedback indicated agreement of overall effectiveness, especially on the Committees work enhancing transparency and accountability in policing.

The Committee's work enhances transparency and accountability in policing.	1
The Committee is effective in overseeing policing.	1
The Committee is effective in supporting policing.	1
Committee members are effective in their questioning and scrutiny of issues.	1

## **5. Next Steps**

5.1 Findings from the committee effectiveness process, and Members' considerations will support continuous improvement and inform the committee workplan and priorities for the year ahead. It will also inform Members development and the overall evaluation of the committee's effectiveness during 2024/25 through assurance reporting to the Audit Risk and Assurance Committee in May 2025.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no financial implication arising directly from this report.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no financial implication arising directly from this report.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **9. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are reputational implications associated with this report. The Authority's committee effectiveness process supports the Authority to effectively discharge its core responsibilities to support, maintain and oversee policing. Effective governance enhances accountability and directly impacts on trust and confidence in policing.

## **10. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no social implications arising directly from this report.

## **11. COMMUNITY IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no community implications arising directly from this report.

## **12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 There are equality implications associated with this report. This committee effectiveness review supports the Authority's efforts to improve the accessibility of its governance of policing, and mainstream equality reporting into its governance processes.

### **13. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are invited to discuss the content of this report.